



The
FUTURE
of
CHILDREN'S
MINISTRY

A KidMin360 Collaborative Children's Ministry Resource

Created by Greg Baird, [KidMin360](http://KidMin360.com)



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Greg Baird, KidMin360



Karl Bastian

In answering to the question, “*What is the Future of Children’s Ministry?*” I’m always faced with a very real dilemma. Do I respond with my **Predicted Future**, or my **Preferred Future**? Because in many ways, unfortunately, they are very different when I look over the children’s ministry landscape today. So, I will give you both. Forgive the use of hyperbole, as I may exaggerate a bit to make you think. But if our goal is to form disciples who will walk with Jesus through high school and into their adult life, we must seriously consider the long-range impact of the strategies we employ today.

The stats are in. Despite all the modern advances of children’s ministry, kids aren’t stickin’ with Jesus after they leave the kids ministry. And blaming parents isn’t the answer. While supporting families is critically important, in our culture, less and less children belong to healthy Christian families, so there will be a growing need for strong children’s ministries to reach those kids missed by godly parents. So let’s take a look at two possible futures and then you can make your choice.

My Predicted Future

The demise of the children’s pastor and children’s ministry. Both have been usurped and swallowed by family ministry. Misunderstanding the distinct difference between children’s ministry and family ministry, churches opt to roll the children’s ministry into family ministry. Rather than embracing family ministry as a church-wide responsibility that should coordinate with and work in concert with children’s ministry, it is seen as the solution and biblical mandate that renders children’s ministry obsolete. Of course, this happens slowly. First the children’s pastor is replaced or simply cut. “Budget cuts” is the excuse. Next, the word “ministry” is dropped from children’s ministry. “Children’s programming,” a disguised name for “child care,” is used instead. This is denied emphatically, but the lack of evangelism, discipleship and truly solid biblical teaching is the proof – those having been delegated to parents. Volunteers are no longer trained to study and teach and lead children to Christ. Instead, they are only trained in safety standards, how to run video equipment, and to foster caring environments. Worship is emphasized and is central to the experience at church. All of which are important, but do not fulfill Jesus’ mandate to “*Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.*” (Matthew 18:19-20) Teaching is limited to highly entertaining programs, mostly video based, revolving around bible stories, and virtues based on biblical principles, often using poor hermeneutics in order to make the Scripture fit the theme. Processing large groups of children through similar group experiences with as few volunteers as possible is key. Resources that make volunteering as easy as possible with as little preparation as necessary are the best selling. And of course, neither children, nor volunteers, bother bringing their Bibles to church anymore, because they simply are no longer needed in the Lord’s House.

My Preferred Future

The resurgence of the teacher and a return of the student. Kids at church are again referred to as “students.” I would like to envision both the children’s pastor and volunteers studying the Bible during the week. I’d like to see children again memorizing Scripture and completing assignments at home. I see them logging on to a website with their parents to interact with materials the church has provided to help them engage with what the church is teaching them. I see Dad getting a text message during the week from the children’s pastor with a question he can ask his son about the main point of the week in class and/or Mom getting an e-mail with ideas for discussion questions the family can use at dinner time about the theme of the month from the family pastor. I see the family ministry and children’s ministry working together;



the first being far broader than families with kids – and the latter being far broader than kids with a mom and dad. Where they overlap, there is a lot they do together, but where they don’t, they have learned that merging them leaves too many left neglected. So the family ministry is reaching far more than the children’s ministry ever could, and the children’s ministry is reaching more than families ever could. Oh, and on Sundays, the pastor of the children, (this is a role, not necessarily their title) is actually teaching from the Word, with a Bible in hand, and the children are following along in their Bibles, some even underlining, learning to correctly handle the Word of Truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)

What the future of children’s ministry needs most for success is a return to an emphasis on the study of and teaching of the Word of God, and less on making ministry easy for volunteers, attractive to families and processing large groups of children through fun environments. That hasn’t produced disciples who will walk with Jesus for life. The future doesn’t need more technology – it needs deeper and better relationships. If technology can foster more connectivity or methods of relating, fantastic! But too often we look to the future as though it has some new thing we need for success, when the truth is we already have everything we need.

His divine power has given us *everything we need* for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” (2 Peter 1:3)

As the founder of [Kidology](#), **Karl Bastian** is a follower of Jesus Christ, the lucky husband of his best friend Sara, and the proud father of Luke. When he isn’t with his family, or hurrying back to them, his second favorite thing is to creatively minister to kids, and equip and encourage others who share that passion... [Read more about Karl](#). Follow Karl on [Twitter](#).

Michael Chanley

The future of kidmin will be disruptive.

When Greg asked me to write for this series I initially was honored and excited about it. However, I then withdrew from committing to the project. You see, here is the problem I have... I can't predict the future. Obvious, right? Any attempt to write about what tomorrow might bring seems vain to me... so, I was paralyzed about how to even begin.

I think strategically; but, a big part of that strategy is the process of beginning and then allowing for change to occur. Then, accepting the fact that I can't control it and have no desire to. No one knows what tomorrow will bring nor can they predict whether or not they will survive the next moment. You can check me on it; but, I'm pretty sure that's a Biblical perspective.

All of this being said... I do hold to the perspective that tomorrow's results are directly related to today's efforts, to one's past experiences, and to God's blessing on their endeavors. Also, we can be certain the future of Children's Ministry will be different. It will change. It will be disruptive. Disruptions are unpredictable. Change is hard.

In the Marines we talked about the friction of change as a constant. Constant change is unpredictable. One has to prepare their mind to expect change... to adapt, to overcome. The failure to do so is a result of complacency. Complacency is an enemy of an organization with a mission for warfighting.

I would argue the Church is such an organization. The christian is on the front line of the battle everyday. As those called to minister to this generation of families and children... our job is simple: prepare them for the war. If we are complacent with our faith, woo'ed into a level of comfort and resistant to change, we are vulnerable to attack and even failure.

We can't know what the future of children's ministry or the future of anything else will bring. However, let me urge you to make your best efforts to prepare for tomorrow by living for today. Do not become complacent and accept the status quo. Make a difference. Fight to advance the gospel message.

The future is ours. Our King has already won the day. Let us be a people united in our celebration of His victory as we work together to bring the light into the darkness and the darkness to the light.

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Rick Chromey

In the earth sciences, particularly geology and paleontology, it's well understood the "*key to the past is the present.*" In other words, through investigation of the patterns, components and substances of the fossil record, we can intelligently postulate theories about life long ago. Of course, that hardly means agreement. Two geologists can look at the same fossil rock layer yet propose radically different narratives.

But if you think looking back is difficult, try looking forward.

It's why I get nervous whenever someone proposes we envision the "future" of anything. After all, my interpretation of what's coming is biased by presuppositions, premature data and no small amount of pomposity that my insights have some deserved merit. I've been wrong before. In 20 years everything I write here could be hogwash.

Nevertheless, because I'm got a doctorate in emerging culture and semiotics (a fancy word for "reading cultural signs"), I often get tapped to speak and write on "what's next?" All I know is the more I know the less I know. Sounds comforting, doesn't it? And yet, honestly, I do believe you can read culture like we read the seasons. We know winter is coming when fall's colors and cooler temperatures emerge. We know summer is back when spring blossoms and buds. To paraphrase the geological maxim maybe "*the key to the future is the past.*" We look forward by looking back.

So here's what I know about the future of children's ministry...

First, it's going to be different than today. I think it's safe to say children's ministry will continue to evolve and emerge, contextualizing to change within the local church. Professional children's ministry was a consequence of professional youth ministry and youth ministry resulted from societal shifts in how we viewed children. As social services like daycares and preschools emerged in the 1970s and cultural institutions like McDonalds and Chuck E. Cheese reinvented the 1980 family eating experience, the church adopted and adapted. Children's ministry began to look like school, Playlands and a place "where a kid could be a kid" (all under the watchful eyes of professionals).

The problem is that model, which fit fine within megachurch frames, now faces a shakedown. McDonalds has moved more "adult" and Chuck E. Cheese struggles in the economic downturn (which many propose may last until 2020). The real successes are in-home restaurant services that deliver meals (ready-to-eat or frozen) to families. Smaller is taller. In-home health and childcare are also popular. The home is king and while many churches pride themselves on "family ministry," very few have pursued an aggressive "in-home" strategy. What if families enjoyed Sunday School *before* they left for church? What if VBS moved from the church to a home and neighborhood? It wasn't so long ago that doctors and pastors made house calls. Watch for that one to return.



Second, the digital world is a reality. I know, a lot of us “older” folks love the paper economy (books, newspapers, magazines, photographs, record/CD covers) but that world is a dying dinosaur. It’s ironic that many fail to see the Bible as “technology” (it is), just like hymnals and bulletins were part of the Gutenberg print culture. When was the last time you used a hymnal? Simply put, in our lifetimes, the Scriptures will go from “Bible” (Greek: book) to “cyber” and “digital.” Here’s a fearless prediction: the iPad will do to books and magazines what the iPod did to music (we just haven’t seen the tipping point, as of this writing in 2010). Consequently, everything in the future will be subject to download (scriptures, curriculum, periodicals, music, movies, video games, and photos).

Today’s children are screen kids. They are growing up digital. Thomas Friedman titled such a world as “flat” but I prefer F-A-T. Fluid. Accessible.

Temporary. One feature of an accessible world is transparency and we’ll see kid-friendly social networks emerge. Another issue is more philosophical: *what is real?* A digital culture computerizes reality. From movies to television, virtual reality creates questions and doubt. We used to say, “I’ll believe it when I see it” but our kids will say “I’ll believe it when I feel it.” In many ways, it’s already happening. An experiential culture is all about emotion, feeling and touch.

Tomorrow’s children’s ministries must humanize Jesus and make him “real” through simulation. Experiential learning and sensory education will replace lectures and “sit-and-soak” teaching styles. And I’d love to see the Church take the lead in social networking for children, wouldn’t you?

Ultimately, the cultural signs point to children’s ministry becoming more home-based, experiential, virtual and networked. Consequently, a new type of leader is needed. Someone who thinks without boxes, embraces circles not squares, leads from the edge not the middle and employs digital frames as relevant cultural bridges.

If you’re reading this, and understand it, it’s probably *you*.

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Jonathan Cliff

The future of Children's Ministry can be summed up in one word. **Robots.** I believe that eventually the technological geniuses around the world will create a Children's Ministry volunteer that will be totally automated to not complain about diaper changes, always show up on time, offer timely encouragement to their children's pastor, be willing to stay for multiple services, and will accurately teach from the provided curriculum without adding their own strange theological nuances. But as I sit and ponder this development, I'm worried. If they can develop a Children's Ministry Volunteer Robot, then couldn't they just develop a Children's Pastor Robot? Scratch that, now that we know the robot is a bad idea, let's look into the future for something a little more realistic. Forget that we ever mentioned this robot idea. Seriously, just move along to the next paragraph!

I believe that the future of children's ministry will be... led by the first generation of leaders raised up in a strong children's ministry. They will be the first generation of leaders to draw back on positive experiences with their families and church leaders, as they themselves strive to provide even more stellar experiences for their own next generations! As I write this I'm a 34 year old that has his share of strange church experiences. I grew up in church (been there 9 months before I was born), but did NOT grow up with anything resembling a strong children's ministry environment. I spent my formative years being "cared for" by kind, loving individuals; but was never a part of a concerted effort to reach kids and change their lives through the gospel. All the children's ministry I



experienced growing up was well-intentioned, but it was never led from the uppermost levels of the church leadership. Now we are seeing the top levels of executive leadership in old churches and the new leadership in new church plants place a high value on leadership to children and families. This gets me excited about the time I live in!

As of 2010, when I see current strong leaders in children's ministry, I see a common theme amongst them all. I see that most of them were raised in fantastic children's ministry environments, and what they are doing is simply taking what they know to a new level.

Take a moment to ponder this future scenario: What will the future look like when the hundreds of kids in a great ministry to families are of an adult leading age? How great will it be for my children leading other children when they are adults?

For the first time in Children's Ministry history, we will have leaders that are not drawing on bad experiences to create good ones; instead we will have leaders creating upon the foundations of great ministry to families to blow what we've done out of the park!

The overall expectation level of children's ministry has been raised to a high level around the world in the past 10 years, and this will only continue to raise it further for our children's children. The future of all ministry is bright for families of this next generation, and I'm excited that the work I'm doing now with children and families makes me a part of it. When I teach a 3rd grade boy in a small group that he can solve the world's problems with God's help, I'm helping to change what could happen for his own children 20 years later. I'm excited for the future leaders that are now in High School that have grown to see what can happen when an entire family engages with truth of God's Word together. They're only a few years away from leading our next generation of children to something we couldn't even think of in our own times!

Jonathan Cliff is the **Next Generations Pastor** at **Trinity Church in Lubbock, TX**. He has been married for 12 years to Starr, and they together have two sons; Ryan is 8, Dylan is 7, and one daughter, Lauryn is 5. Jonathan has a deep desire to see God's redemptive plan for mankind expressed through his own family toward all those around them. He also works hard to make sure that every baby, child, and student at Trinity Church in Lubbock have the best opportunities to discover God's very best plan for their own life. He regularly blogs at www.jonathancliff.com.

Amy Dolan

The Past: Children = Students *and* Adults = Teachers

The Future: Children + Adults = Students, Teachers, Leaders

The future of children's ministry, to me, is a mutual learning experience amongst faith communities that includes both children and adults. A church environment where it's not always obvious who the teacher is, and where it's virtually impossible to identify the classroom facilitator. A mutual and equal learning environment that involves adults and children sharing, teaching, and learning from each other. I think we'll see an expansion of roles as we've previously known them; the teacher may not necessarily be the one who prepared the lesson ahead of time, and the leader most likely won't be the person with the greatest wealth of leadership experience.

The mutual learning experience will be a direct result of the digital era. In the past, the function of the church was educational and consisted of the transfer of spiritual and biblical information from literate clergy to illiterate lay people. Because most of us are now able to read, and we've moved into a digital era where information is available... to all of us, all of the time, we no longer have a great need to attend church simply to receive information. And, the same is becoming increasingly true for our children.

My husband likes to say that the phrase "I don't know" will soon become irrelevant. It's no longer possible for us to not have the information we need at our fingertips. And, it's no longer necessary for children to attend Sunday school simply to learn Bible stories and hear spiritual truths. In the past, children needed adult teachers who had prepared lessons and studied the Bible to teach them spiritual information. We've already begun to get a taste of this radical change. We're witnessing the next generation taking the lead in the teaching-learning process. Children creating videos, photos, apps, video games, graphics, computer programs, and we're watching as they quickly become their own teachers. Children now learn information on their computers, on their phones, and on their iPods, and they've shown that they increasingly won't need to be in a physical building to learn information.



So if a mutual learning experience is our future, and the transfer of more than just information will be required for the church – what then will be the future purpose of children’s ministry within a local church context? I believe it will still be for learning and spiritual growth but not always just for the sake of information. As we come together at church both children and adults, sharing our own learnings and stories, we’ll grow in our faith together. I believe we’ll model faith for each other, and as we teach each other God’s stories, we’ll inspire each one to find his own place in God’s story. And, we’ll grow in love and community. Because what we (adults and children) will find in church that we might not find anywhere else is a community of people, of various ages, committed to each other’s spiritual growth.

How will we do this? By creating children’s ministry classrooms that are intended not just for children, and not just for the passing on of information. Instead creating multigenerational environments that encourage discussion, interactive experiences, art, reflection, and mutual respect between adults and children. I think the future of children’s ministry might not include a separate category of adults in our church called “children’s ministry volunteers.” I think the future of mutual learning includes the entire faith community volunteering to both teach children and learn from children. Now that’s exciting!

Amy Dolan is the leader and founder of **Lemon Lime Kids**, a children’s ministry consulting company committed to fresh approaches in teaching and leading children. She blogs at lemonlimekids.com, Tweets at [@adolan](https://twitter.com/adolan), and loves to receive email at amy@lemonlimekids.com.

Amy Fenton Lee

At some point or another, every kidmin team has navigated an accommodation path for a child with special needs. Gratefully, many churches have responded warmly to an attending child's unique challenges by providing a buddy or staffing a special needs classroom. While a reactive approach to disability accommodation has arguably sufficed, the mindset "we'll cross that bridge when we come to it" is soon to become obsolete. We are all at "that bridge". Children with diagnosed and undiagnosed learning differences are attending (or attempting to attend) all of our children's ministry environments. Without adequate planning, our faith communities 1) deter special needs participation and 2) increase the likelihood of unnecessary conflict and frustration with affected families and/or volunteers. Conversely, when a children's ministry team proactively prepares for disability inclusion, they enable a relatively seamless integration of the person with special needs...which ultimately benefits everyone involved.

The Statistics

According to a 2005 U.S. Census study, 54.4 million Americans, or about one in five U.S. residents, have a disability. This demographic is equal to the population of Florida and California combined. Between 2002 and 2005 both the percentage and number of Americans affected by disability rose, as has been the trend for some time. Statistics also tell us that among children ages 3 to 17, 7% have ADHD, 8% have a learning disability, and 13% have a developmental disability. As if these facts and figures weren't enough, consider the increase in the incidence of autism. According to a 2007 survey, the odds of a child receiving an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis are one in 63. For boys, the rate of occurrence climbs to one in 38. While more than a third of those individuals will eventually lose the autism diagnosis, the statistics should serve as a serious wake-up call to anyone who works with children. With this information in mind, can any ministry ignore the need to prepare for participants with learning differences, communications challenges, and sensory needs?*

The Solution

Looking forward, typical children's ministry settings and all volunteers will be equipped to engage children with a variety of special needs. Self-contained, special needs classrooms will continue to exist in many churches; however, isolated environments will be only a small part of a church's accommodation solution. And while the use of assigned buddies will grow, churches will no longer view the one-on-one helper as the panacea to disability inclusion. The current trend in public schools and in society is for a more integrated and holistic approach to inclusion. To a large degree, this is for good reason. The majority of children diagnosed with a disability have a high capacity for learning and for contribution. For example, only 41% of individuals diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder have an intellectual disability.* So for the other 59% of individuals diagnosed with an ASD, most will have more in common with their typical peers than with the individuals we envision participating in a self-contained, special needs classroom. As a result, many children with an ASD do belong in

typical ministry settings. However, the disability does create differences. And without adequate preparation for those differences, neither the student with special needs nor the volunteer teacher is positioned for success in the church environment.

Progressive children's ministries will incorporate learning exercises, worship experiences, and interactive activities with special needs already in mind. Rather than waiting for the child with learning differences or communication challenges to arrive, our ministry teams will assume those kids are already in attendance. The curriculum and lesson plans will be pre-baked with enhancements and modifications so to more naturally appeal to children who require visual aids, manipulative objects, and sensory experiences. In addition, volunteer training will include information that empowers caregivers and teachers to better manage behavior challenges associated with social skills deficits and special needs diagnoses. Going forward, every component of children's ministry will be reviewed and appropriately adjusted so to better engage children who learn and communicate in non-traditional ways. Providing a more thoughtful approach to our church education settings will ultimately benefit every participating child, not just the individuals tagged with a disability. In addition, volunteers will be less susceptible to fatigue and frustration after they are provided tools and equipped to better manage children with challenging conduct.

In addition, we'll see a renewed value placed on children's ministry policies and procedures. Church staff and volunteers will appreciate the direction and protection that an in-print set of guidelines provides, especially pertaining to special needs situations. The most progressive churches already excelling in disability inclusion attest to the benefits of having strong policies and procedures. Such a guiding document can frame the objectives of a special needs ministry while protecting the well-being of every ministry stakeholder (staff, volunteers, typical children, parents, and participants with special needs). Because disability accommodation is often so subjective and individual specific, the likelihood of relational bruises is greater than in typical children's ministry. Hurt feelings and legal liability can be spared when behavior management guidelines, accommodation limitations, the requirement for parent partnership, and the need for medical disclosure are all addressed as a part of a church's in-print policies. And by spelling out the action steps the volunteers and staff will follow when anticipated challenges arise, the in-print procedures remove the guesswork out of the solution path.

**All statistics and links to their original sources may be found in the "Just the Facts! Special Needs Statistics" post on The Inclusive Church website as follows: <http://theinclusivechurch.wordpress.com/2010/07/19/just-the-facts-special-needs-statistics/>*

Amy Fenton Lee enjoys equipping churches for special needs inclusion through The [Inclusive Church Blog](#). For more on Amy and her writing see www.amyfentonlee.com.

Roger Fields

If you're not confused, you're not paying attention. (Tom Peters)

I do not know what the future holds for Children's Ministry. I confess I am stumped. Trends can no longer be relied upon to predict the future. Game changers break trends into pieces. And we are living in a time of game changers on every level.

Here are some specifics why I cannot predict KidMin's future.

1. Technology expands so fast it has become disruptive. Social media morphs constantly. Email is dying. Most newspapers are already dead. Twitter is growing. Facebook is changing everything. What new technology will emerge tomorrow that will make these obsolete? No one (as in nobody on this planet) knows for sure. How will technology we can't even dream of impact ministry?
2. Political momentum changes directions faster than an NBA guard on a fast break. Will the TEA Party impact the next presidential election? Will Iran get a nuke and dominate the Middle East? Will terrorists strike America again in a big way? Drastic changes in the way American's view government's role will impact the ways they view the church's relevance and, hence, children's ministry. Will disillusion with government raise expectations about what the church can and should do?
3. Moral decline continues to shock. MTV just used under-age kids in sexually explicit scenes. A second grade teacher in Oakland, CA just encouraged children to engage in oral sex in the classroom in front of other kids. Will it just get worse or will there be a backlash? Or both simultaneously. You can no longer make this up. Reality is far more shocking than fiction. Will our moral freefall eventually wake us up to what's happening to our kids?
4. The economy is forcing changes hardly anybody expected. Established businesses crash without warning (AIG, etc.). The housing market imploded virtually overnight.



Churches are watching their giving base dwindle. Two-thirds of churches have already been compelled to make significant changes. Churches are cutting staff, canceling programs, selling assets and even defaulting on loans. Will it turn around?

5. Churches are scrambling for direction. In their effort to become/remain culturally relevant, they have found it tricky to keep up with the abrupt cultural changes they are experiencing. They are trying to find their purpose in a world that never stops shifting. Will most churches be able to navigate these troubled waters?

The world is changing so fast it is constantly disrupting any sense of stability. Changes that once took years, now take hours, sometimes minutes. In a convoluted way Yogi Berra was on to something when he said, "The future ain't what it used to be."

I will predict this much. Real faith/courage will trump trendy strategy. When things change abruptly, strategies fall apart. Faith overcomes. And we will all be asking ourselves one question: what do we really believe?

I am encouraged by watching so many churches that seem capable of making fast adjustments. They get it. The rules have changed. Holding onto the past isn't practical. These are the churches that are surviving, even growing. Their children's ministries, in many cases, are keeping step. They ask the hard questions, face the tough challenges and lead their ministries forward. I'm just not sure if they even know what their ministries will look like in 3-5 years. What we know about the future is that it will be different.

Someone once said, "Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming--WOW--what a ride!" The difference now is that all of us are in for a ride and none of us are quite sure what it will be like.

All we really know about the future is that God is already there.

Roger Fields is Founder and President of [Kidz Blitz](#). He can see more of his writing on [RogerFields.com](#) and you can also follow him on [Twitter](#).

Matt Guevara

Another morning in 2020 and you need some caffeine. You slowly sit up and smell coffee nearby and notice that a fresh cup is already sitting on the nightstand. The robot that came with the house has come in pretty handy, even if her/his/its voice still creeps you out. After jumping out of bed and quickly getting presentable you drop into the back seat of your car and pull out your phone. You always get confused when you use the thing, but you got the phone when your 3rd grader upgraded last month to the iPhone 15. At least you can check email, but it's a struggle to find people who still use it for something other than backing out of serving. You'll have a few minutes to check those cancellations while the car drives you to the church.

In less than an hour you'll be walking through the halls, shaking hands and smiling like a seasoned politician, but as the car pulls into the parking lot you notice that you'll need to find a Dyson Kleenex to siphon off the coffee that has splashed on your shirt. As you walk under the check-in station, you feel like an old car going through a toll. You glance at your phone again which mechanically flashes, "7:45am - 68 kids checked in."

It's time to check the rooms. Nostalgia settles in like a fog over a country road as you flashback to when you were a kid and with a chuckle you notice the only thing that has changed in the room is the color of the chalkboards. Now the dusty, marred surfaces are green instead of black. Built-in shelves line opposite walls with copies of the Living Bible and old notebooks filled with curriculum. Rows of pea green and burnt orange chairs form neat rows from front to back. You roll out the overhead projector from the corner of the room and make sure the puppet stage is set up for the memory verse. You rehearse the Bible story and realize how tough it is to find replacement flannelgraph pieces on eBay. Fortunately you haven't run out of craft sticks in the last twenty years of ministry. Another Sunday morning in 2020.

What's wrong with this picture?

This is a snapshot of what children's ministry will look like in 10 years if we do not change. I know this picture well because I experienced it as a child over 20 years ago and again while visiting a church this past weekend. Given the changes in the way kids learn and the tools we have to engage them in the learning process, the spaces we've created are so often throwbacks to past generations. A widening chasm separates the environment where children learn from the environment where they live out their faith. Overwhelmingly, we have not changed. So I'm not so sure that the future will look much different, unless we make three seismic shifts in thinking and practice.

Collaboration: This shift requires leaders to encourage decision-making among students, involve students in designing instruction, and get input from students about how they would teach. In order to get to this place, leaders in children's ministry need to find new, emerging, creative ways to collaborate and work together to discover the best practices for the teaching and learning process.

Multi-touch: This shift rearranges teaching priorities so children's ministry can focus on content beyond facts that can be recalled at a keystroke. Kids right now are experiencing a world that can be manipulated by their fingertips (think iPod *touch* or Netflix), yet so often the church is focusing the vast majority of its time and resources on making sure kids simply remember facts about stories in the Bible or where to find those stories in the paper Bible. We need learning that is far more immersive and contextual storytelling that is far more meaningful to build a faith that kids care about, not simply know about.

Participatory: This shift recognizes that learners use new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, comment on one another's projects, and plan, design, implement, advance, or simply discuss their practices, goals, and ideas together. Participatory learning is not simply about interaction, but about content creation. American children *now* spend 7.5 hours a day absorbing and creating media. They multitask across screens to cram 11 hours of content into those 7.5 hours. The interplay between technology, composer, and audience is no longer passive - these lines are blurred. The new generation of tools that exist are for expression and connection.

What will another Sunday in your children's ministry look like in 2020?

Matt Guevara is proud to be outnumbered in his house by his wonderful wife of eight years, Noel, and two daughters, Isabel and Sofia. Matt completed his Masters Degree in Children's and Family Ministry at Bethel Seminary in May 2009 and was just named one of the "20 to Watch" by Children's Ministry Magazine. Matt is currently planning a video edition for What Matters Now in Children's Ministry (coming early 2011) in addition to blogging regularly at the [Cory Center for Children's Ministry](#). You can reach Matt via email at mguevara@ccclife.org or [Twitter](#).

Tina Houser

The other day I was reminded of how old I am and how much change has already occurred in my lifetime. During a KidzMatter staff meeting, I made reference to the old telephone party lines. The young, technologically savvy staff that I work alongside was dumbfounded by a telephone system where users would have to share a line with other families—total strangers. I was jolted by how drastically things have changed, but also drenched with a feeling of anticipation for what tomorrow holds.

When Jules Verne wrote about the Nautilus in *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, people laughed at the absurd idea of a mode of transportation that could carry hundreds of men safely through the mysteries at the bottom of the ocean. In 1863, Verne started his career as a science fiction writer, depicting unbelievable idea upon unbelievable idea. Although he died in 1905, long before any of the incredible inventions he envisioned came into being, *he planted a vision inside of scientific minds—minds that were consumed with the thought of what else there could be.* Many of Verne's precise measurements and descriptions perfectly depict the actual invention that came after his death. His spaceship of the future would launch from central Florida. Now where is Cape Canaveral? He was on the mark when he calculated the velocity needed for the spaceship to leave Earth's atmosphere, and described the strange effects of weightlessness to the "t." He even wrote about the fiery blaze that would accompany the ship on its re-entry.



“Whatever one man is capable of imagining, other men will prove themselves capable of realizing.” – Jules Verne.

As each of us ponders the future of children’s ministry, let’s not discount the power of vision. Even if you never live to see your vision take place, someone else heard your words and witnessed your passion. *The vision has been planted in a spiritual mind—a mind that is consumed with the thought of what else there could be.* We’re not done. This is not all there is. So, what do I see for the future of children’s ministry? My vision of the future falls into some categories. We’ll see changes in ...

Who will lead the children.

Already, we are seeing the new direction of who is stepping into leadership roles within children’s ministry. Men! God has done a mighty work and directed the hearts and minds of men. They are undergoing a great awakening to the role they play in raising godly boys and girls. What an absolute thrill this is to witness! When I began in children’s ministry in the 1970s, men who were committed to this ministry were almost non-existent. The hard truth is that the greatest void in the lives of multitudes of children is the lack of healthy, godly male influence. We’re going to see the great benefits of a wonderful harvest and a changed society because men are stepping up to the plate as spiritual leaders ... and I’m sure it’s going to be a home run!

How the church interprets children’s ministry.

Again, when I started calling myself a children’s pastor, there were no networks for the profession, because churches didn’t have a designated pastor for kids. So much has changed, but so much more will change. Although children’s ministry has made it onto the staff page of the church website, it will rise in importance as churches address staffing priority. More and more churches are realizing the importance of raising up a new generation of disciples of Christ and their responsibility to invest in our little ones. Children’s Minister will not be at the end of the staff needs, but will become a position and ministry that churches value and raise to the top of their staffing priorities.

How leaders are trained.

The outcry is growing louder by the day from churches desiring to hire a full-time children’s pastor. In response, our Christian colleges and universities will offer dynamic courses of study to prepare the next generation of children’s pastors for ministry. Although higher learning institutions are slow to pick up the mantel, supply and demand will push them to include equipping their students for this specialized ministry.

What children will be taught.

Wilma Sexton was my kids' church teacher every single Sunday throughout my childhood. She persistently taught two things: God's Word in its richest and purest form and that God has a plan for each life He created. Many ministries have focused specifically on application, so much so that they've neglected feeding children God's rich and pure Word in many respects. Application does not lead the Word. The Word directs our application. Children's ministry will find new, unique and creative ways to teach the rich and pure Word of God so that kids will always know where the foundation of their application comes from. Some things change, but some things don't. The importance of teaching God's Word and that He has a wonderful plan for each of His children has to be of greatest importance.

Tina is the publications director for [KidzMatter](#) where she oversees *K! Magazine* and **The Kitchen** kids' church curriculum. Her eighth book, *Easter-rific*, came out in January 2011. She absolutely loves being able to train volunteers and professionals who have a heart for seeing kids become disciples of Jesus, whether that is through her writing or speaking opportunities. You can see more of Tina's thoughts at www.tinapoint.blogspot.com and find out more about her ministry of training up leaders in children's ministry by going to www.tinahouser.net.

Dale Hudson

Here are my thoughts. Some you may agree with and others you may not. That's okay. I pray that it simply sparks thought, conversation, and change if needed.

The future of Children's Ministry will be tied to the future of "pop" (popular) culture. That statement may make your temperature rise a little...but it's the truth. Many of our current practices are direct reflections of the culture in which we live.

Someone asked the president of MTV how they keep up with the culture. His response, "We create the culture." Take a look at your music, imagery, teaching methods, and communication. If it's being successful...it's probably synced up with the current pop culture.

I know what some of you are thinking...we must stand against the culture if we're going to change the world. Let me ask you a question. How is it going? Pretty simple answer...not too well. You know why? It's going to have to be an inside job.

If we are going to influence the culture and change the world, we must pray God will open doors for children who love Him to become actors, singers, sports stars, writers, and producers. An example is Bailee Madison who is a rising child star in Hollywood. She's not only a star...she's a shining light for Jesus.

I have a close friend who is a producer for Disney and Universal. He trains and places children in key film, television, and musical roles. He is making a spiritual investment in the children who will influence the future.

One of the kids that was in my children's ministry years ago now plays in the NFL. He now has a huge platform to share His faith. We must make these type investments and ask God to raise these children up into roles where they can truly influence the culture from the inside out.

The future of Children's Ministry will become increasingly diverse ethnically and culturally. Most of the population growth in the U.S. will come from immigrants already in the U.S. or those who will migrate to the U.S. No majority ethnicities will exist by 2050 in the United States. Children's ministries will reflect the wonderful diversity of the body of Christ.

The future of Children's Ministry will reside more and more in urban areas.

By 2050, 90 percent of Americans will live in urban areas. We must invest our time and energies where the majority of children will be living.

The future of Children's Ministry will be multi-site. The multi-site church revolution continues to grow rapidly...taking children's ministry right along with it.

The future of Children's Ministry will show sporadic attendance patterns. As I talk with churches across the country, the norm is for families to attend church once every two or even three weeks. As the pace of life continues to race ahead, families will continue to make time choices.

The future of Children's Ministry will see continued emphasis on Family Ministry. Family ministry will not only be focused on partnering with parents to disciple their children, but also discipling parents as part of the process. We will have the opportunity to disciple parents who have very little Bible knowledge or Bible background. They will learn together with their children that Noah's Ark isn't just about the movie "Evan Almighty."

The future of Children's Ministry will involve online children's ministries. As churches continue to expand their online worship services and discipleship tools, they will develop these same online opportunities for children as well.

The future of Children's Ministry will see us moving from the printed Word to the digital Word. Just look at the numbers. In 2009 there were about two billion physical books sold in the United States. Sounds like a lot - but that's down nearly five percent from 2008. This year that number is expected to drop another two percent. But e-books? Sales will go from about \$150 million last year . . . to an estimated billion-dollar business by 2012, as new products from tech companies like Apple flood the market. Kids will bring their Bible to church...but it will be in a digital format. The Bible is just as much God's Word on an iPhone as it is on a printed page.

The future of Children's Ministry will move toward mobile work. Children's Pastors and Directors will be given much more flexibility to get out of the office and work from home or even on the go because of the rapid expansion of mobile work technology. You will see less and less desktop computers and more and more mobile work devices such as laptops and iPads.

The future of Children's Ministry will move from passive learning to active learning. The days of one-way information download will give way to collaborative, hands on, interactive learning. Children's ministries will realize that children who play interactive video games, learn at school by using new interfacing technology, and help determine outcomes through texting, learn best by participation instead of passivity.

The future of Children’s Ministry will be ministering to a wide variety of family units. Single parents, blended families, and grandparents raising their grandchildren will continue to rise. Ministering to children whose parents are living together unmarried will also continue to increase.

The future of Children’s Ministry will be affected by the next big issue that churches must face. The issue used to be divorce, but now it is whether or not homosexuality is an approved lifestyle for a Christ Follower. The decisions that parents, pastors, and church leaders make about this will affect the beliefs of children in the future.

The future of Children’s Ministry will be faced with an increasing culture of pluralism. Churches will have to intentionally teach children that Jesus is the only way to God and eternal life. But they must also be taught to be respectful to others as they stand for the truth. They must be taught to speak the truth in love.

The future of Children’s Ministry will involve connecting with, communicating with, and training volunteers through technology. Online training, YouTube and Vimeo videos, Twitter, Skype, and Facebook are just the beginning of tech tools that will be used to accomplish this. These tools will replace much of the “come to church and sit in a room” style training. As technology continues to rapidly progress, so will the ability to use it for these purposes.

The future of Children’s Ministry will involve more variety in teaching. Media saturated children will push back against the flood of video curriculum that they are being exposed to week after week. Video elements will still be used, but entire lessons taught by video will be replaced more often by a live teacher.



The future of Children's Ministry will be anchored in relationships if it is going to thrive. Kid-friendly buildings, cool music, and funny videos will not keep kids coming. Relationships will continue to be the key. Every child wants to be known individually and cared for by a caring leader. The Children's Ministries that make an impact will keep relational connections at the top of their priority list.

Our ministry canoe is not resting in a stagnant pond. Instead it is being carried down an ever-changing, rapidly moving river. The future is just around the river bend.

We must ask God to give us the wisdom, insight, and courage to make changes...very quick changes at times...to successfully navigate the future of children's ministry.

Dale Hudson has been on the Children's Ministry Journey for over 21 years. He is the Director of Children's Ministries at Christ Fellowship Church in Palm Beach, Florida. He has been married to Pamela for 21 years and they have two sons, Josh, who is 20 and Caleb who is 16. Read Dale's excellent blog [here](#).

Mike Johnson

Once upon a time...

For kids it always has been, and always will be, about the story. The only thing that will change is how that story is told.

Kids are captivated by a good story. Luckily for us, God knew this far in advance and gave us a book full of amazing stories! The Bible.

I am always awed at the power of a creative, well crafted, thought provoking story. Walt Disney (and now Pixar) realized that all the bells and whistles of a movie mean nothing if there is not a strong story to support it, to hold it up. The great news for us is that when we as children's ministers teach our kids the Bible, our stories comes from the strongest story resource in the universe!

As we move further into the 21st century, the Biblical stories will remain constant, but our methods of telling those stories will evolve. We will continue to use more and more of the flannel graph of the 21st century (*video*), which will not serve as a replacement of the teacher but only as a tool to augment and accentuate the story that is being told. We will captivate kids, not just with the spoken word, but with the visual images that new technology will allow us to accomplish. And, by using a combination of video, online technologies, and personal computing we will be able to send the visual story home with the kids in such a way that the lesson learned at church can be further explored throughout the week.



Studies have shown that between 2004 and 2009, the number of 8 to 18 year-olds who own their own cell phone grew from about four in ten (39%) to about two-thirds (66%). The portion of 8 to 18 year-olds with iPods or other MP3 players increased even more dramatically, jumping from 18% to 76%. In this same period of time, home Internet access expanded from 74% to 84% among young people; the percentage with a laptop grew from 12% to 29%; and Internet access in the bedroom jumped from 20% to 33%. The quality of Internet access also improved, with high-speed access increasing from 31% to 59%. With the continual introduction of better and cheaper devices that can easily download and play video, more and more children will have access to watch videos and learn the stories on their own. [i]

In the near future our children's personal Bible study time will become a whole new experience as they see the stories of the Bible visually come to life on their computers and their iPods. And, with the appropriate application questions, our children will then dig into the Word to read these stories for themselves, thus developing the Bible skills that will serve them the rest of their lives. Through these visual stories of the Bible kids will see God's Word for what it is, a book that speaks to their lives today and a book that will help them find the successful life that God wants them to have in the future.

The necessity of human relationship will never go away; we are relational beings who will always require human interaction. However, within those human relationships, our teaching methods will change. We have been afforded a unique opportunity to truly allow the teaching done at church to go home with every child. No longer will learning about God be reserved for the weekend. Instead, what is taught at church can be experienced over and over each day of the week. Every pastor's dream is for the children of the church to be compelled to open God's word and apply it's contents each and every day. The future's technology can make that dream a reality. Soon the norm will be for children to not only view and learn from the stories of the Bible on Sunday, but also to take the visual representations of those stories home with them when they leave. In sum, the oldest and greatest stories will be delivered in new and creative ways, expanding their reach to a whole new generation. Which is pretty cool...since it always has been, and always will be, about the story.

[i] Victoria J. Rideout, M.A. Ulla G. Foehr, Ph.D. and Donald F. Roberts, Ph.D. (2010). *GENERATION M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds*. Menlo Park, CA: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. p 3.

Mike Johnson has been the Children's Pastor of **Fellowship Church** since 1993. In that role, he also continues to reach out to churches across the world with Elevate and Elevate Jr. and to families through Elevate Family. Mike has a Masters in Biblical Studies from Dallas Theological Seminary as well as a Masters in Christian Education with a Children's emphasis. In his spare time, Mike enjoys sculpting, carpentry, and most of all, spending time with his family. Keep up with Mike at mikejohnsonblog.com & elevatekids.com. Follow on Twitter [@mikefjohnson](https://twitter.com/mikefjohnson) & [@elevatekids](https://twitter.com/elevatekids).

Tony Kummer

Kidmin Minus Evangelism Isn't Really Ministry.

My prediction: In the future, kidmin will be less effective at reaching children outside the church. Going forward, I am deeply concerned about un-churched kids in America. I see at least five trends converging to kill the evangelistic impact of our ministry to children.

Before I begin, I need to make two disclaimers. First, my imagination often says more about me than it does the real world. These futuristic predictions likely expose my personal failings as much as they reveal what may happen in the future. Second, my outlook is conditioned by my narrow experience of children's ministry. I have only served within a declining segment of the American Evangelical church. There is much hope for children in the wider Kingdom of God. My full confidence is that the reign of Jesus will continue to advance, especially outside the United States.

Here are the five trends working against our efforts to tell kids about Jesus.

#1 The Lost Generation

In America, each successive generation is less Christian than the one before. Dr. Thom Rainer (President of LifeWay) estimates that 85% of the Millennial generation is lost. This is America's largest generation to date, comprised of those born from 1980 to 1991. Right now, these are young adults age 19-30, the parents in your ministry. That means very few kids right now are growing up in Jesus-following homes and are less likely to attend your church. If this trend continues, our kids ministry will have less opportunity to reach the coming generation of children.

#2 Singular Focus on Family Ministry

The current interest in family ministry is likely to overshadow the greater task of the church to reach all people with the Gospel. Equipping parents to pass on the faith is an essential task, but it's not only task of the church. We can't forget that Jesus loves our weird next-door neighbors just as much as he loves our own kids. If our focus is only on reaching kids within the church, then we are strategically ignoring the largest segment that needs the Gospel. If this trend continues, we will be less aware of the vast majority of kids growing up in un-churched families.

#3 Church Consolidation

Many congregations are not effective in reaching outsiders and making disciples of Jesus. Those churches are declining and dying off while more dynamic churches consolidate the Christian population into fewer congregations. The end results will be fewer congregations that are spread farther apart and reaching less people than before. If this trend continues, unchurched kids will have less access to neighborhood churches.

#4 Weak-kneed Evangelism

The evangelistic zeal of Billy Graham is now a relic of the 20th century. Hard-sell evangelism and alter-calls are losing favor with even the most conservative churches. Some argue this is a good thing because it means less religious manipulation. I'm concerned we are now becoming too careful and even timid when we invite people to follow Christ. Children often hear about God's Love, but never realize they must respond with a decision. If this trend continues fewer kids will hear that Jesus requires them to make a choice. The occasional church visitors may never be challenged to repent and believe.

#5 Fuzzy-wuzzy Gospel

Popular Bible teaching in American is like eating at McDonald's. Almost everyone can tolerate the food, but it's not very good and usually not that healthy. Do you ever wonder why so many churches are sick? The robust than the Biblical message of salvation has been lost. The wrath of God is ignored, sin is redefined, and Jesus only wants to give you a hug. Dr. Albert Mohler (President of Southern Seminary) has warned of "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism" replacing the Gospel. What we teach to kids at church is at least partly to blame. The Bible is much more than a book of morality. Jesus Christ is much more than your best friend. If this trend continues, children will have less comprehension of the real message of God's astounding love for sinners.

I'd love to hear some disagreement with these ideas. In fact, it would make my day to learn that I'm totally wrong. Despite all that's positive in the future of kids ministry, if no kids come to Jesus we just can't call it ministry.

- Thom Rainer, "Lost" <http://www.thomrainer.com/2010/04/lost.php>
- Albert Mohler, "The Spiritual State of the Emerging Generation" <http://www.albertmohler.com/2010/09/07/the-spiritual-state-of-the-emerging-generation-a-conversation-with-christian-smith/>

Tony Kummer is a kids pastor from Indiana. He writes for Ministry-To-Children.com. In Nov/Dec 2010, he was named among the "20 To Watch" list of emerging kidmin leaders by Children's Ministry Magazine.

Sam Luce

Well I intentionally didn't read any other predictions of the future of Children's ministry so as not to taint my article. I could sum up the future of Kidmin with one word....Robots...ok so maybe I have read a few of them. I have not read all of them so if I say the same thing someone else said, I pre-apologize.

To me the danger with thinking and writing about the future is that we feel powerless to do anything, or maybe we are so used to those predictions of flying cars and dinner in a pill that we sort of have a cynical view of forecasting the future. I mean the local weather guy can't tell if it's going to rain tomorrow what chance do I have to see into the future of Kidmin. Then it came to me the future of Kidmin in my opinion is going to be formed by what we have done in the past and how we react to things in the present.

10 years ago you would never have seen kids pastors from a Baptist church work alongside a kids pastor from a Pentecostal church. Today with the online Kidmin community what denomination you work in is an afterthought. Working together to collaborate and conspire to reach more kids for Christ is all that matters. That excites me. I believe based on how we adapt to present challenges and how we learn from past failures will determine what the future of Kidmin will look like.

1. Kid's ministry will finally catch up to youth ministry. - I have always said that children's ministry is about 10-15 years behind youth ministry. I believe that Kids Ministry is closing that gap at a rapid rate due to the amazing Kidmin community we all have a small part in creating. The more we work together the sooner we close that gap.
2. I believe that we are going to have to find new traditions that we can create to reach a new breed of American. Traditional programs like VBS, Camp, Harvest Parties are losing their hold because as our country becomes less Christian there are fewer people that grew up doing those activities. We need a new wineskin for Children's evangelism.
3. The Family focused message will come into a bit more of a balance but will leave a much needed mark on Children's Ministry.
4. Collaboration will move from talking about what you are doing and sharing ideas to actually working together to create something and leverage each others' strengths as churches and not just individuals.

5. Because so many churches are starting to push the value of children's Ministry and Family Ministry from the pulpit. I believe we are going to start seeing more and more kids coming out of high school and college and start working in Kids Ministry because they are passionate about it, not because they got tricked into it like you and me.

I love Kids Ministry. I love our community. I love the local church I believe it's the hope of the world, and most of all I love the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe our future is bright. Based on what we have learned from our past and how we respond in our present we are going to see God do amazing things in our future. We can't control our future but we have the honor working for the Person who does.

Sam Luce has been the children's pastor at **Redeemer Church in Utica, NY** for the past 13 years. He is passionate about empowering the local church to effectively communicate the gospel to kids and minister to families. When he is not working I love spending time with my beautiful wife and three kids. Be sure to read Sam's latest thoughts on [his blog](#), and follow Sam on [Twitter](#).



Gina McClain

Collaboration is a vogue term in ministry circles today. And though the term is sure to change, I believe the concept will endure. Why? Because we've found great value in the diverse perspectives and encouragement gained from collaborating with others.

If I could choose a future of kidmin (as well as predict) I would say that strategic collaboration is the name of the game. And I think we'll see it within communities as churches learn to work together, within church staffs as ministries learn to strategize together and within the family as parents embrace the impact possible through their own actions.

The idea of churches within the same community working together sounds great but the reality of kidmin is... Sunday always comes. Without fail. A reality that's the nemesis to collaboration. In order to get things done we put our heads down and push ahead. We become experts in getting caught up in our little ministry world... our church, our way of doing things... and we lose sight of the forest for the trees.

But technology & social networking has increased the level of connectedness and collaboration among kidmin leaders dramatically. I have friends... close friends... that lead kidmin in 5 different states from 5 different churches of 5 different denominations. We have little in common when it comes to the type of churches we serve. And yet our quest is the same. We're passionate about helping parents lead their kids to abandonment in Christ.

These are the people I lean on in tough times. The people I call when I need guidance, insight or encouragement. I know their families. I hear about their staff. I celebrate their personal and ministry victories. We swap ideas, mudsling and generally sharpen each other and our subsequent ministries. And yet we live hundreds of miles away from each other.

I'm poorly connected with my kidmin peers within the community that I live. And yet I'm sure we could all agree that we share the same quest as my 5 long-distance friends. To help parents lead their kids to abandonment in Christ. We work toward the same goal within the same community. Why aren't we working together? Like a bunch of contractors attempting to build a bridge without communicating with each other. Over time we've got a series of bridges built in our community... some more flashy than others but none living up to their greatest potential. Why? Because two are better than one. I think that's scriptural. (Ecclesiastes 4)

Diving deeper into the waters of collaboration, I believe the future of kidmin lies in partnerships with each other to creatively reach families within our community together. I believe that ministry leaders in general are getting tired of doing the same thing and getting the same results. And there are many of us poised and ready to do something different. The lines that distinctly divided churches in the past will fade even more over time. And as these lines fade, the things that keep us from working together are seen for what they truly are... trivial.

Just as the lines that divide churches will blur, I believe the lines that divide ministries within a church will blur. We're seeing more senior pastors emerge today with a defining desire to see the church be more effective in discipleship. They're willing to structure their church staff in a way that leads all players on the team to a level of involvement in all ministries... cradle to grave. Churches will no longer consist of a series of silos operating in a bubble, but a team of leaders willing to strategize for the overall mission of reaching their community.

I believe mission departments will cease to exist on the org chart. But rather the missional attitude will pervade all areas of ministry. The growing shift we see now will only increase as the North American church owns personal ministry on a new level. No longer seeking community within a church building but proactively creating community by reaching out to their neighborhoods. No longer on the sidelines wondering when the government will solve social issues but rolling up their sleeves and getting their own lives entangled.

I believe ministry to the family will shift as kidmin leaders learn to equip the family differently. Embracing the reality that as we teach kids... we're teaching parents. And as we teach parents, we're equipping them for the journey. The concept of family worship will transition as we tap into the potential of online worship experiences. No longer relying on (or even hoping for) consistent weekly attendance to lead kids through the scriptures, the kidmin leader of the future understands the value of accessible, sound-bite like resources that help lead parents to lead their kids through the story scripture depicts... a loving God that created us to love Him with everything we have.

The community, the church and the family are changing. The question is... will a kidmin leader position themselves to drive these changes? Or sit back, wait and react when they happen.

Gina is a broken, grateful follower of Christ blessed enough to serve in kids ministry at **Faith Promise Church in Knoxville, TN**. She loves to write, loves to teach and loves investing in other leaders. If you're looking for a way to grease her palm, a double short Americano will do the trick. Just sayin'. Follow Gina on [Twitter](#) and find more of her thoughts at [GinaMcClain.com](#).

Matt McKee

What's New? What's next? Are they even the right questions?

Friends, colleagues, neighbors, stock brokers, writers, and even kids seem to be united by the questions, “What’s next?” or “What’s new?” There is something about being new that catches all of our imaginations. Or, better yet, knowing what is coming next makes us feel better. The unknown can scare us and most of us have a huge fear of being left behind or not having the latest knowledge. If we can only figure out what’s next or what’s new then we’ll be ready for the future, right? Not necessarily. I don’t think asking the questions of “What’s new?” or “What’s next?” will help us get to the future. The question I think we should be asking is, “How do we leverage what’s new to help connect with others and build relationships?”



We know that technology is changing at an ever-increasing speed. Mobile app stores, web based operating systems, and televisions run with the Internet were only dreams 5 years ago. Now we have solutions with hardware and software that make it easy for even the novice to grasp and use. But, just having an iPhone or Android phone doesn’t make us more effective or efficient. Those tools are vehicles that can be utilized to help us communicate faster, easier, and sometimes better. They answer the question of what’s next but not the question of integration into the family or the community. To me, the question of integration has less to do with the technology or the vehicle but more with leveraging that medium for something that will never change. Our need to connect with others and build community will always be made new and should always be what’s next. The iPad 7 will be incredibly cool and I’m sure I will want one but if we can’t figure out how to leverage this device to help build community then we are doing ourselves a disservice. The next TV will be able to download apps and stream media from anywhere. But can we make it a place where Mom and Dad don’t have to ask the question, “What did you learn today?” Maybe we could have real life application and teaching points on their TVs ready for them when they get home, and accessible at all times.

It's not about what device is next. It is our ability to integrate with technology for the sake of building relationships, not just for the sake of being cool. Relationships will always be the key. We need to learn quickly so that we can teach passionately that God loves us and wants to spend eternity with us, no matter what comes.

What's keeping churches, ministries, and others from being able to solve this integration or leverage problem? I believe the two biggest hurdles churches will face in the future are funding the vision and filtering information. New technology and advancements in technology are never cheap. It will take funding that is outside of the normal day-to-day. But, realize that it is about reaching new people in a new medium. I don't think a church has to develop the next iPad killer but it does have to make a killer app for it. Those apps will need to be as excellent and creative as possible, and that will take funding.

Filtering will be the other huge hurdle. As a society, we already have plenty of information. We are bombarded with it every day. Simply having information is useless until we have developed ways to filter and integrate it into our lives. Let the end user decide how they want to receive your mission, vision, and message. We no longer live in a world that says "I am going to deliver content in only one form and everyone has to deal with that." We have the greatest message of all time and we have to be willing to share that message on whatever platform will let us.

The future of ministry, not just Children's ministry, is the answer to the question, "How do we leverage what's new to help connect with others and build relationships?"

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Todd McKeever



What does the future of Children's Ministry look like? I would start with those who lead these ministries. It is through these men and women that I believe we will see our greatest impact of changes take place.

I am seeing a change in the "Top Down" type of leader. This older style is being replaced with a leader style who will decentralize leadership so that more people have a voice. It is a win-win type relationship.

The new leader/children's pastor will be the one who will harness the use of technology but will customize that technology to take on an interactive role for all those involved. I believe that even though technology will continue to be a great tool in the hands of all of us, we will see boys and girls want a person-to-person experience that will help take what they are being taught to a level where they are experiencing it. A fun example of this would be the Atomic Tom Live YouTube video. <http://tinyurl.com/atomictomlive>

The boys and girls who are being raised in our children's ministries over these next 5-10 years will be kids who possibly have never seen a mighty move of God and have no one currently close to them speaking into their lives telling them the stories of God and His miracles. This generation of kids will have hours possibly poured into them by many of us about the plans God has for their lives, but it will not truly be understood. We as leaders will need to find ways to call them to action and give them a hands-on cause.

This previous point I made is, in part, why I developed a texting service with the kids at my church. We encourage the kids to bring their cell phones instead of trying to prevent them from bringing them. During the service we put up the number of our Google Voice account and encourage the kids to text in their questions as I preach. The questions go to the soundboard where they have access to my account. They route the questions out to some of our leaders who text back a response to the question. We hold a couple questions back that may be more specific to what I am talking about with the kids for that service and at the conclusion of the service they are sent to me and I answer

them from the front stage. Then, on Tuesday, which we call “Texting Tuesday” I copy and paste the questions and answers from my Google Voice account and add them to the children’s blog. The blog search field is powered by Google and allows the kids to search our site for answers to what other kids may ask them in school. No longer are kids scared to witness for fear of not knowing the answer to specific questions. Now they have the power through their smart phones to search our blog site and come up with the answers to the questions they are being asked. They now understand more about being missionaries to their schools. They now feel they have the power and resources to carry the cause they are on to win their friends to Christ. It assisted the parents as well to help start or carry on conversations with their kids as they too would read over the questions and answers.

The future of children’s ministry demands that kids need both their parents and leaders to believe in them and pour into them daily. What kids don’t need is more technology for technology sake, but relationships that touch their very core. The future I see calls for us leaders to get back to whose Kingdom is really being built?

Todd McKeever is the proud dad of three wonderful kids and husband of his best friend who is his wife, Rachel McKeever. Todd serves on staff at Sheffield Family Life Center in KC, MO. Be sure to check out: www.toddmckeeper.com; www.kidology.org/eoc; and www.twitter.com/TMcKeever

Larry Shallenberger

Four Predictions about Children's Ministry Sure to be Wrong Accepting this assignment was much easier than delivering predictions I'm comfortable standing by. Census trends and Levi and Strauss' four-generation model give us good predictors to gauge future trends. But every generation has some unexpected marker event that changes everything. The tragedy of 9/11 made every futurist's prediction made in 2000 obsolete. Even with that uncertainty I'll take a stab at Greg's question. After all, after the ten years pass, Greg promised a jet pack to the person who had most of their predictions come true.

Jetpacks, people, jetpacks.

Prediction One: Children's ministry curriculums will emphasize Paul's teachings on unity among diverse people. Census data shows that our population is becoming increasingly racially diverse. The Hispanic and Asian populations are on the rise. The church will either embrace culture diversity through its' music, visuals, and doctrine or increase its current practice of Sunday mornings being "the most segregated hour" of the week.

Prediction Two: Children's ministries that emphasize "connecting" with the world over "separating from it" will thrive. Since Roe v. Wade the dominant metaphor that describes how the church relates to the world has been Culture War. However, there are signs that the church is becoming uncomfortable with a posture that has increased political polarity and has failed to create positive change. The data in [unChristian](#) suggests that young parents are less likely to bring their children to church for fear of their children becoming morally bigoted. Children's ministries need to continue teaching God's standards but do an equally good job of showing children and their parents how to serve, love, and enjoy all people.

Prediction Three: Ministry to children will spill into the other six days. Discussion about children's ministry is dominated by the men and women who serve children within the wall of the church on Sunday mornings and the publishing companies that resource them. Churches that commit themselves to being connectors will seek creative ways to meet the physical and spiritual needs of children outside of Sunday morning. Groups like [The Mentoring Project](#) will minister to children in a way that complements the efforts of a church's family and children's ministries. Emphasis will shift away from midweek programs that only meet the needs of church families and will be replaced by after school tutoring programs in poverty afflicted areas.

Prediction Four: Family Ministry will still be at the fore-front of our discussion. Family ministry has enjoyed fad status in the past but was never able to create a critical mass. However, Reggie Joiner's Orange movement changed the math. Reggie provided a blue print that for blurring the lines of a church structure so interdepartmental cooperation can occur. This was the barrier that kept a family ministry emphasis to take root in most churches. In ten years, family ministry will be nearing the end of its experimental phase and we'll see a few dominate models rise to the top.

Larry Shallenberger pastors at a church that doesn't value job titles. He works with family ministry, small groups, and adult education. Larry is the author of *Lead the Way God Made You* and *Divine Intention*. You can find him at www.larryshallenberger.com & follow him on [Twitter](#) .



Tim Shiels

I am very excited about the current conversation on the future of children's ministry. On a personal note this conversation has commenced at an incredibly important time in the life of CCC. As a leadership team we have been having this conversation for several months, asking ourselves what is the future of our children's ministry. When we started the conversation we asked ourselves two very important questions:

1. What do we want our kids to look like?

- We want our kids to grow up in the knowledge that Jesus is everything.
- We want our children to have a confidence in God that allows them to trust him with their lives no matter what. That no matter what situation or circumstance they may face that Jesus is with them and that no matter what the world throws at us Jesus is more powerful than anything.
- We want our kids to be fully connected to God and to discover what it means to live a life for him, with him and through him.
- We want to create a generation of passionate worshippers, who have a healthy devotional life and are not afraid to put their faith into practice.

Once we knew where we wanted to go, it became easier for us to understand how we were going to get there. I know that I am probably stating the obvious at this point but I feel it's important to state that all of this came about through a lot of prayer, leading and guiding from the Holy Spirit and a willingness on our part as a team to commit to positive change.

2. How are we going to do this?

- **Christ centered Bible Based teaching that is relevant to children and will empower them to practically live out their faith on a daily basis.**

We felt that it was vitally important for the future of our church and our children's ministry that our children fully understand the importance of God's word and have made a commitment to emphasize the importance of its study and teaching.

We believe it is important that we look at the bible and seek God to find out what it is he is trying to communicate to us through each story rather than finding a story and trying to fit it to the message we are trying to communicate.

- **Using what we have in our hand to pursue what we have on our hearts.**

We each need to fully recognise the gifts and the talents that God has given us and use them to the best of our ability. As a team if our gift is writing then we will write, if it is storytelling then we will tell stories, if it is computer programming then we will write and design programs

- **Focusing our attention on the children**

As children's ministers our primary focus needs to be children. While it is important that Families are supported we feel that this is a collective role for the church and not just the Childrens Pastor. Children are our call, Children are our passion lets not forget it.

- **Embracing Technology**

We are discussing and investigating the possibility of developing and creating a series of video games that we can host online that would compliment each of our new curriculum themes.

What if we were to throw away the conventional methods of kidz notes and take home devotional sheets and replaced them with vibrant, colourful, creative, engaging, visually and mentally stimulating video games that would help to develop a consistent devotional experience and a healthy devotional lifestyle.

- **Equipping parents**

Parents are the primary influence in any child's life so we have decided to be more intentional about equipping them to minister to their children allowing them to have in a sense their own 'children's ministry'.

Through the use of modern technology such as mobile phones, social networking sites and the internet we believe that we can help parents engage with their kids. Mobile texting, Facebook and twitter etc should not be used as a relational replacement but they can be used to compliment relationships and give us access into lives and homes at times when it would have previously impossible.

- **Recruiting Passionate Volunteers**

We made a decision to move away from using parents just to make up the numbers. As we seek to recruit new volunteers we are committed to recruiting volunteers who have a passion for service and a passion for children and are fearless in expressing their passion for God. We are also making a commitment to supply our volunteers with the best possible resources and training available to us.

- **Creating a space for our children to experience God**

While it is vitally important that we teach the Bible we also felt that it was vitally important that we give our children the opportunity to experience God and put their faith into practice. Very often in life we learn by doing and our memories are very often linked to an experience.

We feel that it isn't enough to teach our kids about service but that we should create a space for them to experience God through service. This same principal applies to a lot of what we feel lead to teach in the future. We want to give our kids the opportunity to experience God in as many ways as possible, not just in our church services.

Ultimately we believe that our call is to manifest Jesus to whoever we can, whenever we can, where ever we can. Everything we do should reflect his character and life in all its glory.

Tim Shiels is a Children's Pastor at Cornerstone City Church in Northern Ireland. His blog is [KidzMinistryOnline](#). Also, follow him on [Twitter](#)

Justyn Smith

Children's ministry has certainly come a long ways in its short existence. There is probably no other ministry in the local church that has as many different and unique ways to teach and reach out to kids. The reality to the question—what is the future of children's ministry?—is probably unfortunately simple. There will probably not be much of a change when you think of all the churches that are out there and the resources available to them. Some of the “bigger players” will see some pretty amazing changes, while most average churches will continue serving the vision and doing a great job at that.

My desire is to see children's ministry go a few directions:

Children's ministry should go mobile. While I believe most children's ministries have missed this small thing called the internet. I believe we should invest into mobile technologies. We should go to where the kids are going. Many kids—younger and younger—have mobile devices that are just waiting to have a worthwhile Jesus-filled experience. Though creatively teaching through the internet is still important, we should focus on what's next and not on what already was.

Children's ministry will go back to being relational. We have correctly been using video teaching, video games and other technologies to stay relevant to children. Children use and see technology every day, several times a day. Therefore, what we have been using is no longer “cutting edge”—it's the norm. Creating environments where adults can connect with kids to encourage and disciple them will be vital. We all agree that it's the parent's primary responsibility to disciple their children, however reality is that they do not and some will never. That is why those moments of face-to-face time will be so vital as children's ministry continues.

Children's ministry will be more about the family. There's no doubt that the current trend of focusing on the family unit must continue. As we focus more and more on families and parenting, we are building a firmer foundation for children. Back in the 50's the church unintentionally created a psychological change in who should be developing children spiritually. Time is the only way we



can measure the success or failure of something new. Perhaps time has shown us that dividing children from their parents in church wasn't the greatest. Really, that's a debate for another day. The point is that family ministry will continue to develop and become a more vital part of the church as an organization.

Children's ministry will increase social media presence. One of the coolest things about social media is that we are all literally a finger touch away from each other. This is great on a few fronts. First, children's ministry is probably the least competitive ministry in church. In other words as lead pastors and youth pastors may "compete" with each other; for the most part children's ministry does not. From my viewpoint we are supportive and have a huge desire to help each other. Social media has allowed us to connect more as leaders from teaching purposes via Skype to encouragement via Twitter. Social media builds up leaders. Social media also allows us to connect more and more with parents and children. Instead of relying on letters or email, we can instantly connect with people via text, Facebook or instant messaging. Finally, blogging has become such a huge hit in kid's ministry and I only see it increasing. It's a great way to catch up on the latest, "borrow" other's ideas and take part in the discussion. I have a blog at justynsmith.com and there are many other's as well. Social media is our friend and I would encourage leaders to check out sites like cmconnect.org.

There are probably countless other things the future of children's ministry has to look forward to, however these are in my heart. Where do YOU see children's ministry in the future?

Justyn Smith is married to **Brieana** and together have five amazing kids. Justyn is the children's pastor at South Hills Church. He has a huge heart to see this young generation grow up to be the greatest leaders and influencers in history. He consults, writes and is a frequent conference speaker. He is an advocate for the local church who believes the local church is the hope of the world. Justyn has recently been named one of "Children's Ministry Magazine's" Top 20 to Watch. Talk with him at justynsmith.com or connect with on [facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Gordon & Becki West

Children's ministry of the future will be at the forefront of the Great Commission and in the center of God's work on earth...unless we get in the way. But it may not look and feel anything like the ministries we are currently producing within the United States.

Our world is tilting south. Where are things really happening in the kingdom of God today (and presumably in the future)? Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia. Browner skins, Spanish and Chinese mother-tongues, local movements – all are replacing, surpassing, the work of the church in the United States and other developed western countries.

In the next ten years, we will see more and more missionaries coming to the United States (praise God, we need them). We are already seeing fewer going out from the west.

Meanwhile families are in trouble. While the western church is waking up to the Deuteronomy 6 mandate for parents to lead in nurturing their own children, too many children's ministry leaders are turning "family ministry" into the name of yet another program. While the movement is right on, we need to be careful that the local implementation does not become another sophisticated church activity that the church produces with a really glossy cover!

The church does not seem to be meeting the needs of young adults. The 20-something generation seems to truly desire God, but is disengaging from the church. Among the reasons is that our myriad of activities are not fulfilling their desire for religious experience.

These young adults are now having children. This gives children's ministry leaders a window of opportunity, but we must make the right choices. We need to help families (of all shapes and sizes) learn to live out the gospel before their children in everyday life (isn't that Deuteronomy?).

If we continue to make children's and family ministry nothing more than a "program," whole families will soon be disengaged, as well. (Interestingly, those parts of the kingdom where God is moving have much to share with the west in these areas.)

But God is moving among children themselves. Around the world, children are at the forefront of huge spiritual movements.

Kids are praying. The global prayer movements involving children around the world have never existed in the ways they do today. These will continue and expand, as children want to be seriously involved with God, not just entertained. Young people are seeking God's will, asking about their own involvement in missions and praying for social justice for the world. (See KidZ At Heart's Global KidZ Prayer Retreats at <http://www.kidzatheart.org/mobilize-your-kidz/>.)



Kids are growing. While adults too often flounder in their own spiritual lives, children are responding to God's voice in dramatic ways. A new understanding of spiritual formation is allowing children the freedom of being with God, of being transformed by a truly personal relationship with God. We believe that God's Spirit will continue to move among the youth in more and more dramatic ways.

Kids are sharing. While over one-third of the unevangelized in our world are under the age of 14 and this population is steadily increasing, isn't it just like God to create revival through the kids themselves? If we want to work where God is working, we need to go beyond sharing the gospel to train children to be evangelists themselves.

So what about the future of children's ministry? We fear that children's ministry in the U.S. could become irrelevant, if we don't learn a lesson from the youth ministers who have gone before us (as youth ministry has "matured," most leaders have recognized the need to disciple teens and grow depth beyond programming). Children's ministry leaders (we confess our own involvement in this area) have created a "slick" program at church that inadvertently trained parents to "leave the driving to us." Let's be careful about what we call "family ministry." Let's remember that our culture, our parents, our senior pastors and board members, are all desiring

effective ministry, but it too often looks like "the best show in town" to those who don't dig deeply into the child's heart.

But we believe that God is working among his churches and his children...and his children's ministry leaders. So we have great hope! It is our prayer that the future of children's ministry in the United States would move forward in partnership with the rest of the world. Think of what could happen:

...if we began sharing the best of our training with less resourced churches around the world, but stopped making ourselves feel better by giving away our “affluence” in ways that don’t truly bless these brothers and sisters;

...if we began learning true family values from our poorer brothers and sisters in Latin America or Africa, where TV and over-scheduling don’t get in the way of family time;

...if we saw others as God sees them, creative, made in His image, seeking after Him with all their heart – whether the “others” wear a different color of skin, speak a different language, live in a different culture, or...belong to a generation that’s a few years younger than ours!

Gordon & Becki West are founders of **KidZ At Heart International** and serve as the President and Executive Director of this Phoenix-based missions agency. Gordon & Becki have more than 30 years of experience in family and children’s ministries in the local church, having served on church staffs in Colorado and Arizona. They are popular conference speakers both nationally and internationally. Their writing credits include [The Discipline Guide for Children’s Ministry](#) and [QuickGuide to Discipline for Children’s Ministry](#) (Group Publishing) and [Preteen Ministry Smart Pages](#) (Gospel Light). They are also regular contributors to “Children’s Ministry Magazine.” Connect with the West’s via [Kidz At Heart](#), Facebook: [Gordon](#) or [Becki](#); or [Twitter](#). Follow Gordon’s personal blog at [KidzPrez.wordpress.com](#)

Henry Zonio

My greatest fear for the future of children's ministry is that we continue to call cosmetic changes revolutionary and innovative. We try new methods, employ new technologies and even attempt new educational strategies. Yet, at the core of what we do in children's ministry remains transferring right information in to the minds of children and families in the hopes that right practices and right beliefs follow.

What is needed for children's ministry to move into the future and to the forefront of the rapid cultural changes that continue to happen is for the DNA of its educational model to shift. Children's ministry needs to move from an informational paradigm to a transformational paradigm.

What do I mean by a transformational paradigm?

In short, a transformational paradigm not only helps families and children know God's Story as revealed by his Word but helps families and children identify with that Story so they actively find their place in that Story. This goes beyond a mere adherence to a moral or religious code. It requires encouragement of families and children to submit to the Holy Spirit in all aspects of their lives and follow the Greatest Commandments to love God and love others (Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Families and children go from being spectators and imitators of God's Story to being active and willing participants in the Story itself.

In order for transformation to happen, children's ministries need to want families and children to:

- **Discover** who God is,
- **Experience** his love for them,
- **Live** the way God wants them to, and
- **Bring** God's Kingdom to their world.

DISCOVER who God is

The focus of most children's ministries is to *show* children and families who God is through Bible stories and theological teaching. Transformational children's ministries want families and children to move further and use what they've learned about God to paint their own picture of who God is in their lives. This picture will look different for each family and child, and this picture will change over the course of the life of a family or a child. In this way God becomes real and present in the lives of families and children. He becomes more than a character they read about in the Story, he becomes the author of the Story they are a part of.

EXPERIENCE God's love

Trying to explain what it means to experience God's love is like trying to describe a sunset to your dog. So here's my best attempt at it. Transformational children's ministries want families and children to move beyond a love that serves as a transaction between them and God. They want families and children to experience a love that transforms their lives. This kind of love requires an intangible, intimate, and vulnerable reception of God's immeasurable love for humankind. In so surrendering to God's love, it is the hope of transformational children's ministries that families and children love God and love others. (1 John 4:9-12)

LIVE the way God wants us to

Living the way God wants us to is more than just adherence to a set of rules that mark a person as a follower of Christ or somehow wins someone points to get on God's good side. Transformational children's ministries want families and children to follow God because they have experienced his love and realize that following God is better than following a path of their making. (Jeremiah 29:11, John 10:10)

BRING God's Kingdom to the world

Becoming disciples of Christ involves more than receiving personal assurance in one's eternal destiny. It involves more than knowing the right things and doing the right things. Transformational children's ministries want families and children to be a part of bringing God's Kingdom to their world. (Matthew 6:10) In other words, they want families and children to become agents of positive change in the world around them. This includes, but is not limited to, offering compassion to the needy, fighting for justice, and caring for creation. These efforts to bring God's Kingdom to the world go beyond a desire to do good or make things better. These efforts are motivated by a yearning to see people commit to following Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20) and experience life transformation through submission to the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8)

Adopting a transformational paradigm means more than using different tools or being relevant. Being transformational in your approach to children's ministry means making key changes in philosophy and ethos. It means seeing salvation and discipleship less as "being part of the winning team" and more as being active participants in God's Story of redemption in the world today. The future of children's ministry cannot be about how to better pass on information. The future of children's ministry has to be about enabling children and families to be transformed by the Holy Spirit and in turn encouraging them to be a part of the Holy Spirit's transformational work in the world today.

Henry, a husband of one and father of four, has over 15 years' experience in children's ministry ranging from being a volunteer to full time Children's Pastor in the United States and Canada where he had the opportunity to experiment with various spiritual formation strategies. Henry authors [Elemental Children's Ministry](#), a blog which facilitates conversations about the mutual influence of children's ministry and culture. Check out his website and be sure to follow him on [Twitter](#) also!

Greg Baird

I love the idea of Children's Ministry! I believe it is the single most impactful ministry in the church. We serve the group (kids) that is the most receptive to the spiritual formation process, equip the people (parents) who have the greatest impact on that group, and work with servants (volunteers) who usually don't care who gets the credit. Does it get any better than that? Add in that our work environment includes fun worship, lots of games and goofy teaching and it's really the perfect job!

It's been this way for my 20 plus years as a Children's Pastor. But Children's Ministry definitely has changed! When I started we didn't have a quarter of the resources we have now. I did not know another male Children's Pastor. I could not jump on [CMConnect](#) or [Kidology](#) or any number of other websites and find the resources I needed. There was no #KidMin hashtag.

It's different now. But it's the same. Methodology emerges, but purpose remains.

As a Children's Ministry leader I have the same mission as I did when I started:

- *Engage children for life change (spiritual formation);*
- *Develop leaders to build relationships & invest in families;*
- *Equip parents to disciple their children in the home.*

Someone once said,

"When it comes to the future, there are three kinds of people: those who let it happen, those who make it happen, and those who wonder what happened."

I don't know what the Future of Children's Ministry holds when it comes to what it might look like. Twenty years ago it would be unimaginable to envision what it's like today. But I do know what I believe we ought to be *doing* in the future – the same thing we've been creating for all these years.

- *Engage children for life change (spiritual formation);*
- *Develop leaders to build relationships & invest in families;*
- *Equip parents to disciple their children in the home.*

We must be intentional – not someone who lets the future happen to us.

We must be clear in our mission – transforming lives through our investment in the church and our equipping of parents to disciple in the home.

We must be alert & attentive – so that one day we won't look back on our ministry and wonder what happened.

It can be a daunting thought if we look well into the future. Had I known what today would look like when I started back in the day, I'm not sure I would have been able to handle it. The unknown of the future, the pace of change in our society, and the struggle we all face to align all of it in our ministries can be overwhelming.

Thankfully, as Abraham Lincoln once said, *"The best thing about the future is that it only comes one day at a time."*

That is still true today. So focus on your mission. Three things I started out doing are the three things I still want to accomplish every day, every week, every quarter and every year of my ministry – one day at a time.

Focus on these things with excellence, maximize the tools we have available, and trust the Lord to move beyond our capabilities. Do this and you really won't have to worry about **The Future Of Children's Ministry**.

A personal note: When I originally thought about doing this series, I had no idea that so many incredible Children's Ministry leaders would respond, graciously giving their time and energy to think through the question: What is the future of Children's Ministry? They wrote these articles for free and for this I want to personally thank each one of them. For the reader, I would encourage you to visit their sites, follow them on Twitter, and friend them on Facebook. These leaders represent some of the best in Children's Ministry – learn from them! And I want to thank YOU, the reader, for taking time to download this resource & review it. My hope is that it causes all of us to pause & think about what we do every day in our ministry, and that we do it intentionally and on purpose. **Greg Baird, KidMin360**



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