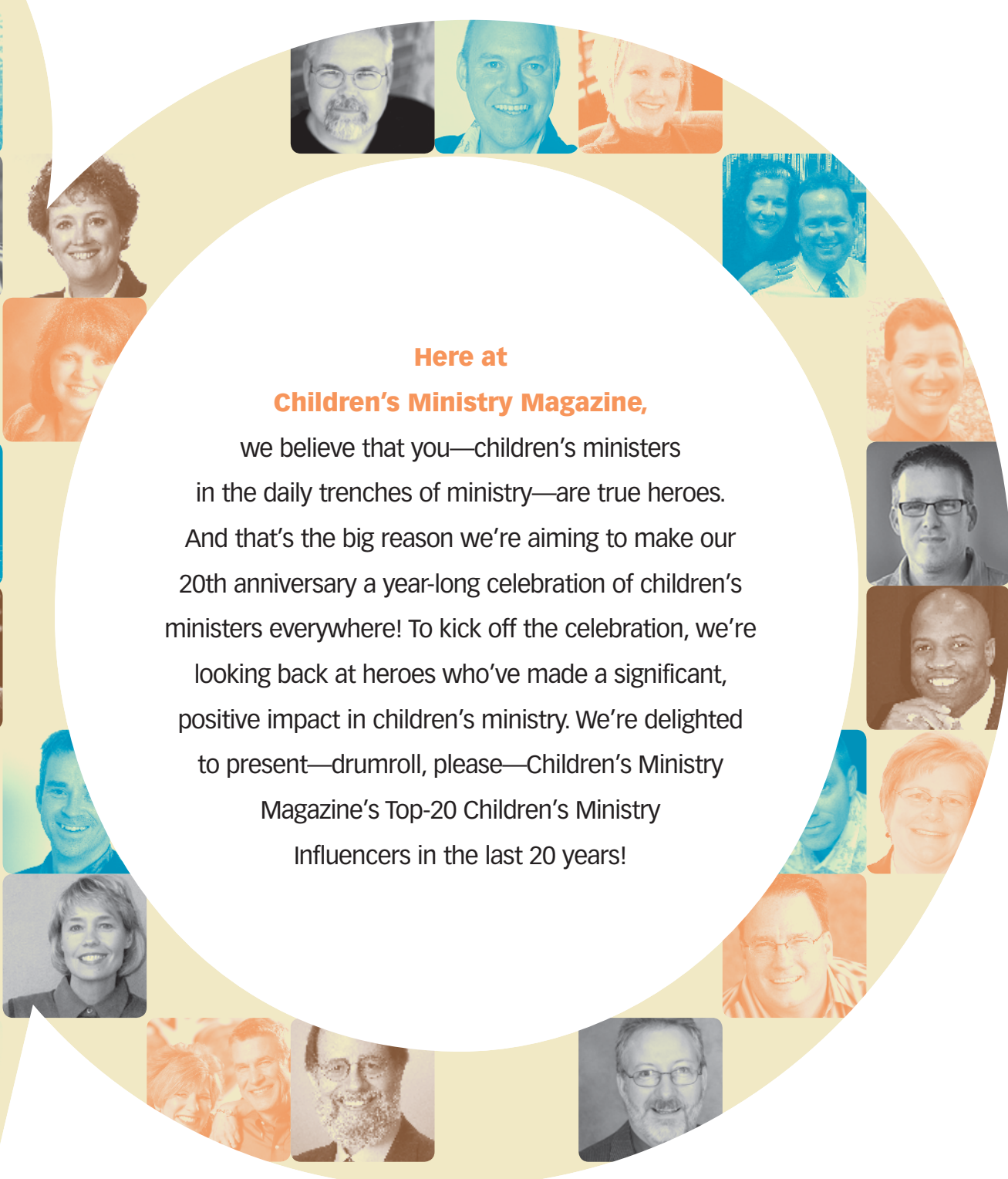




The Top-20: Leading the Way

Meet Children's Ministry Magazine's picks for the 20 most influential and impacting voices in children's ministry today!





**Here at
Children's Ministry Magazine,**

we believe that you—children's ministers in the daily trenches of ministry—are true heroes. And that's the big reason we're aiming to make our 20th anniversary a year-long celebration of children's ministers everywhere! To kick off the celebration, we're looking back at heroes who've made a significant, positive impact in children's ministry. We're delighted to present—drumroll, please—Children's Ministry Magazine's Top-20 Children's Ministry Influencers in the last 20 years!

Top 20

KARL BASTIAN

author, executive director of Kidology, Inc.



Karl, a self-proclaimed children's minister since childhood, is driven to support and resource children's ministers. He created Kidology.org, a pioneering website developed in the mid-1990s as a resource for leaders and volunteers. Today the site contains online training, discussion forums, hundreds of lesson plans and ideas, links to other children's ministry resources, and a near encyclopedia of other helpful material.

Karl developed Kidology not only as a source for valuable information and resources, but also for children's ministers to connect with one other to share concerns and prayer requests, to ask questions and hopefully find answers from others. Through his writing, blogging, and social media efforts, Karl has left an indelible imprint on children's ministry.

Through Kidology, Karl's passion is to "reach and teach as many children as possible with the Good News of God's Love and in the process to enlist, equip, and encourage others to do the same."

JEROME BERRYMAN

author, curriculum developer



Jerome's extensive catalog of writing—whether through Godly Play curriculum or through his numerous other writings—has helped to transform thousands of churches' approach to children's ministry by helping them see that meaningful, lasting learning comes from childlike curiosity and play.

Jerome's and the late Sonja Stewart's book *Young Children in Worship* is considered a landmark work on how to introduce 3- to 7-year-olds to the wonder of worship. Jerome's work inspired the Godly Play "I Wonder" series that leads children in reflective worship as they interact with Scripture.

Jerome continues to lead the way in workshops and training avenues to transform the way children's ministers look at how children encounter God.

ROB BRADBURY

children's pastor, national director



Rob is a well-known leader in children's ministry in Australia. He's the state and national director for KIDS R US, a national children's ministry in Australia. He also serves as the international director for the Kidshaper Conference, where he provides resources, leads workshops, and encourages other children's ministers.

He's released six children's music albums. He speaks around the world at training seminars and workshops for children's ministry leaders and volunteers. And he's authored four books: *Fly, Sound, Quadrants*, and *Taste*.

Rob and his wife have been in children's ministry for 21 years, and they lead the successful and far-reaching PlanetKids children's ministry at Planetshakers, a 4500-member church in Melbourne.

SYLVIA FOTH

author, founder of Kidzana Ministries



In 1998, Sylvia founded Kidzana Ministries, an international ministry that's gone on to train and equip more than 10,000 volunteers and leaders all over the world to minister to children and transform their lives for Jesus.

In addition, Sylvia took on key roles in several other far-reaching initiatives to spread the gospel to all children across the globe. Among these: 1 for 50 Training Initiative, 4/14 Global Initiative, Global Children's Ministry Conference, and the Global Children's Forum.

Sylvia recently wrote the book, *Daddy, Are We There Yet?* about where the Christian community stands in reaching the whole world for Christ. Her diligent efforts in education, equipping, training, and in-the-trenches ministry have had a profoundly positive impact on global children's ministry.

DICK GRUBER

author, professor



Dick has long been a voice of wisdom, practicality, and encouragement in the realm of children's ministry. He's dedicated much of his professional life to equipping effective children's ministers through education. He created the children's ministry program at Valley Forge College in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, nine years

ago and co-founded Children's Ministries University Online, an accredited educational program.

Dick served as the national leader of children's ministries for the Assemblies of God Church for eight years. He's known for the book *Children's Church: Turning your Circus into a Service*, and he created the popular character Sam Saint Super Sleuth.

About his legacy, Dick says, "Hopefully I'll be known as a voice of true worship in the children's church and that deeper study of God's Word will be encouraged in all aspects of children's ministry."

JEFF HARMON

ministry pioneer, children's pastor



Jeff was integral in the inception of the pioneering children and family ministry program at Vanguard Bible College in Alberta, Canada, and he directed the program for its first two years. He continues to teach the introduction to children and family ministry course.

Jeff has worked for 21 years in the same church where he became a Christian, and he serves as the children's pastor interacting with all departments, a creative team, volunteers, teachers, and, most of all, children.

His passion for kids and the importance of children's ministry is unwavering. He currently speaks at conferences, workshops, and preteen and youth camps in Canada and beyond. Jeff continues to network with local children's ministry leaders by providing resources, training, and encouragement to them.

He says his key focus in ministry is a revised motto of Billy Graham's: "Children anchored by 12 won't be lost at sea at 21."

DALE HUDSON

author, director of children's ministry



Dale has served as a children's pastor for over 21 years in some of the most dynamic ministries. He co-wrote *Children's Ministry in the 21st Century*, *Turbocharged Children's Ministry*, and *Turbocharged Preschool Ministry*. He's also the columnist for volunteer leadership for *Children's Ministry Magazine*. He's written articles such as "Lessons From Walt" focusing on the importance of family- and child-centered environments, atmospheres, and relationships.

Dale currently oversees the direction of children's ministry across five campuses of Christ Fellowship Church in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Along with

Bruce Barry (Wacky World Studios), Dale created a ground-breaking interactive, Disney-style worship environment for children that's now used as a format in churches across the U.S. His expertise on creating magnetic ministries makes him a sought-after speaker and author.

REGGIE JOINER

author, founder of the reThink Group

Reggie is best known for his trailblazing efforts to revolutionize the way churches view children's and family ministry. He's the author of the bestselling book *Think Orange* and founder of the national Orange Conference. He plays a key role in family-ministry curriculum development through the reThink Group (most notably 252 Basics). Reggie is a sought-after speaker, bestselling author, and a true visionary in the realm of children's and family ministry.

His children's ministry career began at North Point Community Church in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1995. It was during his time there that Reggie grew convinced that children's ministry must be connected directly to the overall vision of the entire church. From this beginning, he quickly emerged on scene as a change agent in the world of children's and family ministry.



CRAIG JUTILA

author, founder of Empowering Kids

Craig spent 13 years with Saddleback Church heading up one of the most recognized and dynamic U.S. children's ministries. He's authored or coauthored numerous books on children's ministry, including *Children's Ministry in the 21st Century*. Craig shares his ministry wisdom and insights at conferences and workshops across the country.

His focus today is on his family and his non-profit ministry, Empowering Kids. This ministry provides ministry resources and leadership training and encouragement to children's ministers.

His desired life legacy? "I hope the legacy I'm most known for is attributed to me by my family, that my wife and kids would say, 'It hasn't always been this way, but my dad made radical changes in his life and put his family first. He put us above work, ministry, writing, and speaking. He made changes in his life that put his family back where they should be... He made less but loves us more.' "



Top 20

PATRICK MCDONALD

founder, chief executive officer for Viva Network



Patrick leads VIVA, a mission organization that reaches 8,000 churches worldwide serving at-risk children in the slums of 24 different countries.

He is currently developing three training products for leaders, volunteers, and entire projects for ministering to seriously at-risk children in the developing world. He also works alongside the 4/14 Movement and the Lausanne Movement (where he is senior associate for children at risk) to reach children all across the globe.

Patrick says his hope is that children become the priority in the Great Commission, and “that the church has the biggest opportunity ever to show its care and concern for the last, the least, and the lost by focusing on reaching children dying on the doorsteps of our congregations.”

RICARDO MILLER

author, student ministry pastor, and founder of Ricardo Miller Children's Ministries



Ricardo's children's ministry influence has expanded greatly over the past few years, as evidenced by his strong following on social media

such as Facebook and The Black Preaching Network. His ministry reaches far beyond the walls of his home church, The Pathway of Life Church in Dallas.

Ricardo has planted several effective children's ministries throughout the Bahamas and around the Caribbean. He's trained hundreds of children's ministers and directors through conferences and workshops. He's the author of four books: *Wisdom Keys for Children's Ministry*, *141 Good Habits for Children*, *Parenting with a Purpose*, and *Volunteers: How to Get 'Em, How to Keep 'Em*.

SUE MILLER

author, member of creative team for ReThink Group



Based upon her work as former executive director of Promiseland Children's Ministry at Willow Creek Church in Chicago, Illinois, Sue co-wrote *Making Your Children's Ministry the Best Hour of Every Kid's Week*.

This book proved transformative to children's ministry thinking in that it challenged the status quo of babysitting kids.

Sue's focus is on engaging children in learning and worship. Today she works alongside Reggie Joiner at the ReThink Group and Orange developing preschool curriculum and training, equipping, and inspiring children's ministry leaders and volunteers.

“God is going to use us and these kids' parents to bring kids across the line of faith on our watch,” says Sue.

DENISE MUIR KJESBO

author, lead faculty



Denise began her work in children's ministry in 1983 as a director of Christian education and hasn't looked back. Over the course of nearly 30 years, she has worked in churches, taught in colleges and seminaries, written articles, and presented at seminars and workshops.

She has served as director and lead faculty in children's and family ministry at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her focus has been on multiplying her knowledge, gifts, and skills by educating and equipping others. She does this through Bethel with formal and informal education, and online networking with children's ministers and recent graduates.

Looking forward, her goal is to stay the course—to continue equipping leaders for children's and family ministry as well as to integrate the two ministries to impact not only the child, but also the entire family.

THOM AND JOANI SCHULTZ

authors, founder and president and chief creative officer of Group



Thom and Joani have worked together for more than two decades to revolutionize Christian education through relational, experiential, applicable, and learner-based (R.E.A.L.) education. Since Thom founded Group in 1974, the company has developed nine different curricula for

children's ministry, four magazines, annual vacation Bible school materials, and hundreds of resources for leadership training. Under Thom and Joani's leadership, the children's ministry resources developed at Group touch millions of lives each week.

They say their greatest desire in ministry is "that children and children's ministry leaders truly experience the transforming love of Jesus because of our resources. Lives are changed. Incredible things continue to happen."

PAT VERBAL

author, manager of curriculum development



Pat may be best known for "My Family's Prayer Calendar," which she wrote with Shirley Dobson. But in the past decade she's also become a true champion of ministry to children with special needs.

Pat's years of experience as a teacher, school administrator, and children's pastor uniquely equipped her to develop resources and curriculum for children with special needs for the widely respected Joni and Friends ministry. Pat has been instrumental in the first-of-its-kind Joni and Friends Certification in Disability Ministry program.

Pat has translated her passion for ministry to these special children into ministry resources. She created the *Special Needs Smart Pages* resource and

wrote *Special Needs—Special Ministry*. She's the columnist covering special needs for *Children's Ministry Magazine*, and she wrote "Autism and the Church" for the book *Life in the Balance: Biblical Answers for Issues of Our Day*.

GORDON AND BECKI WEST

authors, founders of Kidz At Heart International



Long considered two of the most wise and unwavering voices in ministry, Gordon and Becki have worked diligently to train leaders and volunteers with practical advice. They're the founders of Kidz at Heart

International, an organization that trains and equips leaders and volunteers around the world to teach children about Jesus within their own culture.

Over the past 20 years, Gordon and Becki have also trained over 100,000 moms, dads, and teachers on how to more effectively minister to their

own children and students. They cowrote *Dynamic Preteen Ministry*, touching on an area of ministry that hadn't received much attention prior to the book's arrival. They've also served as the columnists on discipline for *Children's Ministry Magazine*.

With their ministry, Gordon and Becki hope to cast greater global vision for children's ministry; to encourage and equip those involved in children's ministry; and to articulate a clear philosophy of children's ministry based on God's love for children and our knowledge of how children learn and grow.

JIM WIDEMAN

author, next generation associate pastor, and founder of Jim Wideman Ministries



Jim has long been one of the most influential forces driving children's ministry to the forefront of the church nationwide. His hallmark focus on leading volunteers and staff has made him a sought-after author, consultant, and speaker.

Jim is a pioneer whose contributions to children's ministry discussions have been important and relevant through over more than 30 years of ministry. In addition to training and equipping seasoned children's ministry workers, he's passionate about partnering with newer children's ministers by giving them free admission to his monthly Children's Ministers Leadership Club where he offers advice and counsel. Jim also created Infuse, a 6-month coaching and mentoring program for new children's ministers.

CHRISTINE YOUNT JONES

author, children's ministry champion for Group



Over 20 years, Christine has created training for 200,000 children's ministers. She leads the charge at Children's Ministry Magazine and serves as the voice of children's ministry at Group. She's written 10 books and developed Grapple Preteen and Buzz curricula. She oversees children's ministry resources at Group.

Christine speaks across the U.S. on training, equipping, and celebrating children's ministry. Her "From the Editor" letters, blog, and social media efforts keep leaders up on trends and her ministry insights.

Her ultimate desire: "I hope people will see me as someone who's connected them with one another, best practices, and creative ideas—and ultimately made their job of partnering with God to transform children's lives easier." **cm**

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