

A Senior Pastor's Perspective

An Interview - Brent Trask, Lead Pastor and Debbie Palsky, Children's Pastor, Bow Valley Alliance Church, Calgary, AB



Laughter Might be Just the Medicine

Joanne Leggatt, Bayview Glen Alliance Church, Thornhill, ON



Debbie: Brent, how do people in your church know you value children?

Brent: I think one of the key ways is the public visibility of how I interact with my own three children. For instance, last week, my Grade 2 son came with me to pre-service prayer time. Our people hear how I pray with and for children and I have been personally involved with our children's ministry in setting long-term vision and goals for our ministry to kids. I am an advocate for children's ministry by making sure funds are there for a high quality program and for staffing who have a dream to carry this vision forward.

Debbie: Tell me about your week-end ministry to children at Bow Valley.

Brent: Our mission is to assist parents in building a spiritual foundation for children and on any given weekend 14 to 170 children will flood through our doors at our three services. Debbie, you are helping to mentor our two part-time staff, Joy and Tracy, and other key leaders to instill values and to be a voice to church leadership.

Debbie: How do you actively promote and validate children's ministry?

Brent: We freely give up-front time and bulletin space to build up children's ministry and to recruit workers. On weekends when I do not preach, I purposely go into classes to meet our kids and their shepherds. We also build into our church calendar a Children's Ministry Vision Sunday to elevate the public profile and passion for our ministry to children. It is high energy, fun, creative and puts our kids front and center. The testimonies by kids about the ministry they have experienced always makes an impact.

Debbie: Are there changes you would like to see made in your facilities or program?

Brent: We have not been able to build the facility of our dreams, but when we do, I would like it to include fun space designed for kids. Why not create a self-serve McDonald's type play area for parents to use when they are in our building for meetings or ministry serving time? Many churches have cappuccino kiosks for adults, what about a place for kids?

Debbie: I am told one of the reasons families come to Bow Valley is because of the children's ministries. What do you think draws them?

Brent: In short, three things – enthusiastic volunteers, genuine respect and love for kids and quality programming. We try to walk our talk and parents see the value that we place on our kids in the way our kids are greeted, the security systems that we have in place, our high volunteer to student ratio and the atmosphere where friendships are made with peers and adults in our small group times.

Debbie: I am the fortunate one who gets to work with you and benefit from the value you place on children's ministry. Do you have one last gem for our readers?

Brent: Yes, I do. If your church finds themselves in the in-between zone where you do not have funds to hire full-time staff but would like to – consider this idea. For the first year or two, ask your core team of children's ministry volunteers and leaders if they would be willing to increase their investment of time and energy in the ministry if the Board would significantly increase the programming budget. By doing this, you can get a bit of help by adding part-time staff or by taking a major leap forward in the adding of resources. When your leaders and Board band together, it brings a major increase in your program potential. Your ministry should then take off and grow to where it will warrant a full-time staff person as well. It worked for us!

Debbie: Thank you Brent for your insights and your support. Your passion for children shows!

Each spring, we like to raise the awareness of our Children's Ministries to peak interest before we begin our recruitment for summer and fall ministries. One tool that has been useful in helping us to achieve this goal, has been a video produced by Group Publishing called "Recruiting For Children's Ministry."

The video has several short commercial-like segments that can be played during the announcement time of your worship service. My favorite is a spoof on the T.V. show "The Crocodile Hunter" in which the Australian outback man is hunting for the "coveted female children's ministry volunteer" and the "illusive male volunteer." Another segment called "Prescription For Life" resembles a commercial for a new drug out on the market. After the pitch for teaching Sunday School as a cure for what ails you, the announcer warns, "Caution: Ministering to children may result in a compulsive urge to break out in laughter. People with chronic grouchiness should not volunteer. You may discover a personal fulfillment you never dreamed possible. Side effects include spiritual growth and the realization that your life counts in the kingdom of God."

This product is not generally sold in local Christian bookstores as it was produced for one of Group's conferences. However, it can be ordered for a cost of \$19.99 U.S. The ISBN number is 646847-10213-4. The Canadian distributor for Group Publishing is R.G. Mitchell Books (1-888-GROUP-55). If you have any difficulties, ask for Claudia Herrarte.

A THOUSAND WORDS

At all of our big events, I have a photographer go around taking pictures of what is happening in our children's ministry. We blew them up to huge proportions (better publicity and more volunteers are the worth the money spent) and designed big building blocks that we stacked in the entrance into the foyer and then on the platform for a couple of weekends in August with a sign saying "Build Into a Child's Life." A picture is worth a thousand words!

Laura Hahn, First Alliance Church, Calgary, AB



A MAC CELEBRATION

One of the ways we profile our kids' ministries at Morden Alliance Church is through our annual Sunday morning "CE Celebration." Our kids usher, lead the congregation in worship and several kids are featured musically during the offering. This worship service highlights each one of our Kids' departments and ministries in creative ways. The last "Celebration" had our Promiseland perform a drama that was used to sum up the 12 weeks of teaching where they studied the major events of the Old Testament. The adults learned a few things! The Kids' Church department showed video clips, taken throughout the year, of all they do on a Sunday morning. Our Special Events team highlighted the theme of our up and coming VBS program with a short skit and the theme music. The Preschooler Department did a game show based on "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" and called it "Who Wants to be a Preschooler Volunteer." The Nursery Department had some of their toy equipment on the platform and talked about the joys of volunteering with these little ones. Even the Library got into the morning and highlighted some of the excellent resources available for children and families. The morning ends with a few words from the Senior Pastor who validates the ministries and prays for our leaders and our kids. It's fun, informative, worshipful and a true celebration of our ministry to kids.

- Glendyne Gerrard, Morden Alliance Church, Morden, MB

Top 10 Reasons

The following is a sermon preached by Pastor Brian Buhler of the North Shore Alliance Church on "Top 10 Reasons Why Kids Are God's Top Priority." You'll want to pass this outline on to your Pastor!

"Kids are God's top priority ..."

- 10 Because whoever welcomes a child, welcomes Jesus. - Matthew 18:5
- 9 Because the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to kids. - Matthew 19:14
- 8 Because the Father's good pleasure is to reveal Himself to children while hiding His truth from the wise and the learned. - Matthew 11:25
- 7 Because God is not willing that even one of them be lost. - Matthew 18:10
- 6 Because God has ordained children and infants to be worshippers. - Matthew 24:15
- 5 Because the praise which comes from the lips of children silences our enemies. - Psalm 8:2
- 4 Because of the tenderness of a child's heart. - 2 Timothy 1:5; Ecclesiastes 12:1 - 8
- 3 Because of a child's vulnerability. Matthew 18:5 - 6
- 2 Because child-like faith is held up as the model for everyone. - Matthew 18:1 - 4
- 1 Because He loves them. - Matthew 19:13 - 15; Mark 10:13 - 16; Luke 18:13 - 17"