



Cory Center Coaching

by Barb Cionca

Several years ago we relocated to the Twin Cities when my husband took a teaching position at a seminary. After getting the family settled, I signed up to substitute teach in the local public schools. My degrees were in early childhood and elementary education, and in

our previous locations I had worked as a preschool teacher and director. I loved what I was doing, but a few months later the pastor of the church we were attending asked if I would consider becoming their first Children's Ministry Director. I had held key

volunteer positions in children's ministry through the years, had experience with administration and understood church politics as a pastor's wife. This sounded like something I could do with my hands tied behind my back! I remember thinking to myself

"if only they had asked, they could have had me for free!"

So with more confidence than was warranted, I said yes and walked into my new office a few weeks later. Sitting down I looked at the clean surface of the desk, the empty

bookshelves, the unfilled filing cabinet. And I thought “what do I do now?!” Oh, I knew that I would need to meet the volunteers, observe programs, find out what curriculum was being used, begin to get to know the children and their families. But this was Monday morning and Sunday was seven days away. What should I do today?

That was the beginning of a new learning experience for me. I quickly discovered that the job couldn't be done with hands tied behind my back. In fact I wished I had four more sets of hands and feet and eyes and a lot more hours in my day! And I needed someone with more experience than I had to help me navigate the ins and outs of this new ministry. I networked and talked to people in the field of children's ministry and found a Children's Pastor who had both education and experience to walk with me and field my unending questions. Penny was my mentor for a year and is my friend to this day.

The Cory Center for Children's Ministry of Bethel Seminary was designed to serve people working in the field of

Children's Ministry. One of our initiatives is the Side by Side Coaching program which pairs a graduate of Bethel's Children and Family Ministry masters degree program with a children's ministry leader who is either newer in ministry or is experiencing challenges and who would benefit from a mentor to walk with them. The coach and participant meet face to face at a one-day training event and then meet online and by phone 1-2 times a month for a year. The coaching is tailored to the individual needs of the participant.

Thirty-two coaching pairs have gone through the program in the first two years. We're currently taking applications for the 2010 calendar year. Training will take place on January at the Children's Pastors Conference in Nashville, or March at the Children's Pastors Conference in San Diego. The cost for the one year program is \$500 and partial scholarships are available as needed. For more information or to apply, please email Barb Cionca at bcionca@bethel.edu.

cory center
for children's ministry