

Welcome, Grant Escandón, New Director of Children's Ministry

If you've been in church and watched our middle school and high school choirs singing over the past year or so, you've probably noticed the young man leading them in sweet song — Sonlight and Sonburst Choir Director Grant Escandón.

Now, the 2018 Cal Lutheran graduate is stepping up to become Ascension's new Director of Children's Ministry. His first day is July 3.

Grant's degree is in music, with an emphasis in music education. He says he's always wanted to teach, and much of his education centered on how to pass along to children the knowledge he had learned. His inspiration: great teachers in his own life.

"There were three or four, tops, who had that kind of dedication to come early, stay late, call students' homes," he notes. "Kids can tell the teachers who are just more — who are not just in it for the job or the money. There's not much money anyway," he adds with a slight laugh.

He taught music to children in the Oxnard School District for a stint. Back in 2016, he worked with 6-9 year-olds at a sleep away camp in Washington State.

What took him to the Pacific Northwest? He and his girlfriend of four years didn't want to spend the summer apart and she had an opportunity in Washington. Hence, his summer job.

"That was so much fun," says Grant. Taking the children out on a boat to an island in the Puget Sound for camp "was really special and magical to them." He recalls having an activity-packed schedule ready for the kids — nature hikes, arts and crafts, archery lessons, etc. — but found they usually wanted to spend their days on the beach, enjoying the beautiful world around them and being together.

Grant's association with Ascension began when Dr. Wyant Morton mentioned to a handful of his students that the church was in need of a youth choir director. As for taking on the Children's Ministry leadership role, it came about after Grant had suggested a few friends to Pastor Julie McCain as possibilities for the job. Then one day, she had an idea: Grant himself should try for the position. After a test class and several interviews, we had our new Director of Children's Ministry.

The personable Grant, who has one older sister, hails from Newbury Park. He grew up Catholic; his dad has roots in Italy, Mexico and Spain. Over time, Grant began to realize all his friends were Lutheran, and he was spending more time in Lutheran church than at mass. Of course, majoring in music at a Lutheran college had an impact as well.

He's been attending Ascension in recent months as well as working here, and looks forward to getting to know members of the congregation outside the music milieu.

He comes aboard at a time when Vacation Bible School is already planned and prepared, so his first task will simply be "helping facilitate VBS, to make sure they have what they need."

After that, his passions for Children's Ministry will go into play. Those include teaching children "how to stay in worship and enjoy it. I want to teach them that worshiping is great."

He's also keen on finding more ways to extend opportunities for multigenerational worship and learning. Says Grant, "I'm really excited for this."

A word from Pastor Julie:

The Director of Children's Ministry is a crucial position in the life of our church, and in my own prayers and discernment, I knew from the beginning that we weren't just looking for any person, but for the right person. A huge thank you to Julia White and Paul Trent for interviewing candidates alongside me; as the three of us sat in the office unpacking Grant's second interview, we did what you usually do: What are the pros? What are the cons? And as we got to the cons, Paul and Julia both said that the only reason they could think of to NOT hire him was that he was TOO GOOD. And then we realized that someone being too good is not a reason to not hire them! Personally, I am excited for Grant's passion and energy, organization, critical thinking skills, his love for children, teaching skills, and authentic faith. Clearly you can tell by my too-long list, that he brings a wealth of gifts to this position!

Grant has a lot of people to get to know—if you're invested in Children's Ministry, I'd encourage you to reach out (continued on next page)



Grant Escandón, Children's Ministry Director (continued)

to Grant and invite him to have coffee with you. Please join me in welcoming Grant to this new position, and in surrounding him, and our whole Children, Youth, and Family program in prayer. I'm excited, and I hope you are too! God is up to something awesome in this place!
