

MATTHEW ARQUERO

Cornerstone Community Church
San Diego

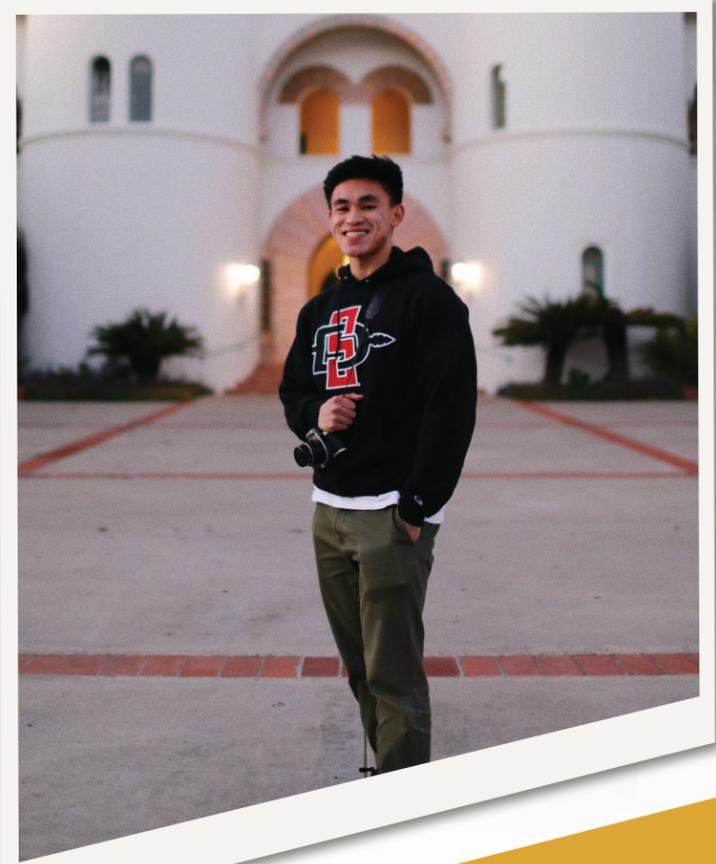
Background:

How did you connect with GCI? I was essentially born into GCI. I grew up attending South Bay Christian Church in San Jose, California, led by Pastor Mel Dahlgren, and I was surrounded by some of the most loving people I've ever met. The church has gotten much smaller over the years, but the folks are just as compassionate. Many of them have watched me grow up, and sometimes it seems like I'm the only one who's aging. From there, I was given many opportunities to attend SEP camps for some summers as a teen and eventually started to attend GCI conferences and other events.

Once I turned 18, I was able to be a counselor for these camps and pay forward what was offered to me. I love working with kids, so stepping into that role has brought me so much joy. Once I moved to San Diego for college, I started to attend Cornerstone Community Church led by Pastor Mark and Anne Stapleton, who welcomed me with open arms. I don't think I have a definitive role at Cornerstone; I just consider myself part of the family. I'll run slides for the services, play the cajon for worship and give an offering message every month or so. I've even given a sermon once, and I'd love to do it again.

What are some of your reasons for choosing to participate with GCI in ministry? GCI really does feel like a family. In my experience, they always encourage members to use their gifts to lead in whatever capacity they can. I truly feel like I matter and that I have something to offer. There's a communal willingness to learn and recontextualize new ideas that I also don't see very often in other spaces. Essentially, I choose to participate with GCI in ministry because I feel valued, and I want to cultivate and share that same type of love with others.

What is your ministry or calling? What is the legacy you hope to leave? If I had to describe my ministry in one word, it would be "reframing." Through photography, I want to document the moments that most people perceive as ordinary and capture the depth in the stories we see around us. I want young kids to learn that the whole point of life is to always be curious and remain in wonder. "Grow up, but don't grow old," as I like to say. Most of all, I want to be remembered as someone who unconditionally cares for, listens to, and accepts people for who they are. What's the use of being a great artist or leader if you're not a great friend? I hope to leave a legacy of seeing love everywhere and being someone who really understands.



Get to Know Matthew

1.

Who has invested in you to support you in your ministry? Mel Dahlgren, Judah Dwight Sanders, Mohammad Ali, Mark and Anne Stapleton, Ree Liv, Cara Garrity, and Fred Stevens. There are many more to name, but these people in particular saw something in me that I was often blind to. Thank you all for helping me realize and develop my gifts.

2.

Struggle or life lesson you would like to share: A lesson I'm learning every day is to always make room for life. Be open to the miracles and surprises that life gives us, and realize that everything is not in your control.

3.

What makes your region different than other places in the world? I think San Diego has the best weather and sunsets in the world. We also have some of the best Mexican food in California and so many beautiful beaches. You don't have to surf to enjoy San Diego.

4.

Everyone who knows you knows you love: UMI and her music.

5.

For what are you most grateful? These days, I'm most grateful for friends and the number of memories I've been able to co-create with them. Make sure to find people who support you and really love you, and you'll cherish them forever.

6.

Is there something unique about your church services that connects with your community? After services, our youth group will spend the rest of our day at the Stapleton's house to watch movies, play board games, and eat dinner together. It's always my favorite part of the weekend.

7.

How do you experience/feel close to God? Through living outside of myself. For me, this looks like taking photos, watching a sunset, listening to the waves, being aware of my breath, and laughing with my friends.

8.

Describe your perfect day: My favorite days usually involve a nice balance of time alone, time with friends, time outside, and not looking at the clock. Some of the best days I've ever had were the ones that didn't require any planning. Ideally, I'd love to wake up early to meditate and take the time to make breakfast. Drive to the beach for people to watch and take film photos of whatever grabs my attention. Lie in a hammock and listen to birds sing as I watch the sunset. Play Super Smash Bros or board games with my friends at unholy hours, ideally ordering some Taco Bell when we get the munchies. There's no secret formula for the perfect day, but experience has taught me to do at least one thing you enjoy doing every single day.

9.

What are 5 things you can't live without? YouTube, peanut butter, a film camera, sticky notes, and Google Docs.

