The presidential elections

Natural-born citizen, at least 35 years old, resident of the United States for 14 years, primaries, caucuses, state delegates, super delegates, national nominating conventions, general elections, Electoral College—welcome to the United States presidential election process. Confusing? Yes, at least to the Kuyper College students interviewed for this article. However, they all agreed that this time around the country stands to make history.

“What’s important to me is not how a person becomes president of the United States, but who becomes president of the United States,” said John Stockeland, class of 2011. While it was evident that each of the students favored a specific candidate, the topic of conversation keyed not on the candidates, but on the election process and what it means to them.

“It is about having the freedom to vote,” continued Stockeland. “It is one of the privileges that comes with democracy. I realize and appreciate the price many have paid to gain and preserve that right.” As a Marine recently returned from Iraq, Stockeland said that he saw firsthand the “ultimate price paid for our right to vote.” He was involved in heavy combat in Fallujah, considered one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq.

To Sarah Poulisse, class of 2008, voting is an opportunity to express who she is and what she believes in. “Voting allows me to...”

Definition of Ministry

The definition of ministry

Steph Vander Hart during a youth rally in Hollywood

In third grade he announced to his teacher that he wanted to be a pastor and a truck driver. According to him, he was a spiritually sensitive kid who always tried to do the right thing. Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Stephen Vander Hart, class of 1994, grew up in what he describes as a “very conservative home where my parents worked hard at raising us kids. We learned very early that the fear of the Lord was the beginning of understanding.”

Yet something was not right as “Steph” entered high school. “It seemed to me that the message I was receiving from adults that I respected, from my parents, and the church in general was that no matter how hard I tried to be good, I was not good enough,” said Steph. “I thought God viewed me the same way and nothing I did was going to change that. This made me very angry.” According to Steph, this anger expressed itself in rebellion during his four years of high school. “I was insecure and looking for acceptance,” he said. “This, and my anger, drove me to act out in destructive ways. Others looking at my life may have thought I was having the most fun I could ever have, but on the inside I was lonely and lost. I was longing for something more.”

Steph spent the summer after graduating from high school working as a dishwasher at a small Christian camp. “The camp staff was great, and through their love and insights, I began to see God differently,” he said.

On April 20, Kuyper College will have completed two years of a planned three-year process to reposition the College for increased growth and a greater impact in building God’s Kingdom.

According to President Nick Kroeze, this process has been a viable and essential strategy for the College to thrive into the future. “This effort has been terrifically hard,” said Kroeze, “but incredibly beneficial. It has demanded that the College analyze itself, study the market, meet higher accreditation standards, clarify its sense of identity and fit, and attract more students and resources. These have been healthy, appropriate and necessary demands for...”

Two years after the name change

Name Change

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Elections

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Kuyper College equips students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and his world.
I walked out the front doors with one of our students who is a Marine, recently returned from Iraq. We were on our way to retrieve a box from my van. Stepping into the cold autumn rain as we continued an ongoing conversation, I was aware that he was wearing just a t-shirt. I also noticed that he didn’t skip a beat in our conversation. It struck me that it didn’t faze him that it was cold and rainy—he was focused on a task and engaged in a conversation with a “commander,” and weather had nothing to do with it. For me, it was too late. While no Marine, I couldn’t run back in for a coat or umbrella and let on to him that I knew there was weather out there! So on we went and back we returned...with me headed straight for the hot coffee!

I knew right away that our Marine’s indifference to the weather was a result of his training. Weather is an “incidental” that matters only when planning a landing or taking a shot. Focus. Concentration. Subjugation of the body. Perhaps it will be no surprise to you to see this attitude mirrored in the stories you read in the Kuyper College News. It is humbling and amazing to learn what our graduates are doing out in the world. They truly are people out there for the sake of Christ who are focused on the mission. Perhaps we have some small part in the training that enables them to rise above natural environments, situations and challenges, but we have to give surpassing credit to the Spirit of God within them that they are motivated and capable to go where the majority of the church does not.

As they bravely proclaim the message of the Gospel, they boldly make their way through cultures, governments and religions that stand in strong opposition to the Christian message of hope and salvation. I have never heard the word “bravery” mentioned by any of the many graduates I’ve spoken to over the years. At best, they will smile and move on to other things when I ask them what kind of dangers they face. It’s really not, in their hearts and minds, questions of dangers and bravery. What they do, they do because they are excited about the call God has given them and they are energized by how God works out that calling through them. Every moment is an adventure of discovering and seeing God at work. The joy of seeing people come alive with the new-found discovery that sins can be forgiven, that they are loved, and that there is a hope and a future for them is a reward and motivation that far surpasses concerns over dangers. Everything else? Incidental. Praise God we have the joy of knowing, training and supporting these kind of students in their service for him!

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroese
President

Looking back at the first season

“The Kuyper College basketball season started with none of us knowing what to expect,” said Zach Harris, men’s basketball coach. According to both Harris and Candice Kalman, the women’s basketball coach, they entered the season with high hopes, but with the realization that their teams were young and inexperienced. “Boy, were we surprised,” said Harris.

Despite a rash of injuries that contributed to the women losing their first four games of the season, the team rebounded in the remaining games. They split the rest of the schedule, ending with a 9-13 record and winning four of their last six games. That record earned them a fifth seed in the Midwest Regional tournament of the NCCAA.

The men’s team got off to a fast start, winning on their first try at home against Grace Bible College, and then taking perennial NAIA powerhouse University of Michigan-Dearborn into overtime before losing by eight points. But the biggest test for the men came against Cincinnati Christian, who at the time were the highest-ranked team in the NCCAA. Kuyper won 92-88.

Rankled as the first seed in the NCCAA Midwest Regional tournament, the Kuyper men finished the season with a 16-13 overall record, winning 11 out of 12 games in their region and ranked 8th in the nation.

Editor’s Note: The men’s and women’s teams did not advance to the National NCCAA Tournament.
Reflection on relationships

Richelle White
Assistant Professor of Youth Ministry

Snow, snow, snow and more snow are the first words that penetrate my thoughts as I think about my first year in Grand Rapids. However, specifically when I reflect on my first year at Kuyper College, I resonate with the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift.”

Words cannot adequately express the gift that Kuyper has been to me since my relocation to Grand Rapids. I am eternally grateful to be in a community of people who love and serve God with their heart, soul, mind and strength, and I am fortunate to be the neighbor that has been loved as one loves oneself.

Caring and supportive relationships have been instrumental in my adjustment to an area hundreds of miles from my Virginia home and family. Relationships with faculty, staff, students and administration have been and continue to be nourishing to my mind, body and spirit.

Relationships are the lifelines of community. They are the shoulder to lean on—the unspoken comfort, the good times, and the shared laughter and tears. Healthy relationships offer these benefits and many more. They boost self-esteem, provide companionship, and promote well-being. In short, good relationships are good for one’s health.

Following this view, developing and maintaining healthy relationships involves give and take. Sometimes we’re the ones giving; other times, we’re on the receiving end. Giving support to students at Kuyper has been a blessing and a joy. Through my teaching I try to instill confidence, values, and creativity in students, as well as encourage mutual accountability. Students and I are co-learners in the pursuit of education. Entering into these relationships—initially as professor and students and growing together as supporters, encouragers and friends—embodies the essence of healthy relationships. Healthy relationships act as a buffer against life’s hardships and help us to develop resilience.

Healthy relationships are rooted in God. He is the creator of relationships. God desires that we have healthy relationships with one another. However, his desire is for us to have a healthy relationship with him first, since all else flows from that starting point. God’s desire for our relational well-being is three-fold—that we love God completely, that we love others compassionately, and that we love ourselves correctly. It is my prayer that Kuyper continues to grow as a relationally healthy community.

“In My Words” is a feature of The Kuyper College News highlighting first-person stories by Kuyper College faculty.
The Music & Worship program

Through a generous gift, The Richard and Helen DeVos Program of Music and Worship and the Jack Van Laar Chair were established in 2005. The program is designed to train worship leaders to be capable practitioners across a diverse continuum of music and worship styles and traditions in professional, church, parachurch and other settings. The endowed Jack Van Laar Chair will be occupied by the program’s director.

First offered in 2006, the program has attracted interest and involvement by students at an exceptional level—seven percent of enrolled students are now active in the program. “We believe that we are on the front end of a significant wave of interest as current students are promoting the program to others,” said Professor Carol Hochhalter, one of the significant forces behind the development of the program. “In addition,” she continued, “we are developing a strong reputation for a program that is theologically and biblically grounded while being relevant and engaging.” According to Hochhalter, students not only learn from a very robust four-year curriculum, but can also take advantage of a state-of-the-art music laboratory with electronic and traditional instruments, computers and software. “This helps them,” she said, “to learn music the way they want to believe. “There on that dock I made a deal with him—I gave him one year where I would do everything in my power to meet him halfway and for him to do the rest,” said Steph. “What a year that was.”

A week later he headed west to California with a few dollars in his pockets. To earn the money he needed to complete the trip, he worked for a Christian farmer in Iowa. “The farmer took me under his wing and began to disciple me,” said Steph. “I spent four months working for him. God planted me and nurtured me on that farm so I would grow spiritually.” After arriving in California, it took Steph only four weeks to realize that it was time to go home.

Once he was back in Michigan, Steph began looking for a church. Soon, he began attending his uncle’s church in Holland. One Sunday, a guest speaker described the amazing things God was doing on the streets of inner-city Philadelphia. Steph felt prompted to go there and find out what was going on. “Once there I experienced the power and protection of God in amazing ways,” he said. “Working with mature ministry team members, we reached out to street kids, prostitutes and the homeless. I fell in love with this thing called ‘ministry’—letting God love others through me.” According to Steph, it was then he realized that ministry was what he wanted to do for the rest of his life.

One year passed and Steph knew that if he was going to be successful in his life’s calling, he needed training. So he called Kuyper College from a pay phone to announce that God had led him to attend classes here. “The polite woman on the phone told me about applications, financial aid, and all the deadlines that I had missed,” he said. “She also informed me that classes were starting in three days.” Not deterred, Steph asked to speak to her boss, who told him to come to campus and they would talk it over. Steph was accepted and started taking classes immediately.

Four years flew by. During that time, with a group of friends from the College, Steph helped start an inner-city ministry in downtown Grand Rapids that reached hundreds of kids. As he describes it, the team would go to class and then hit the streets teaching kids what they had learned from their professors that day. At times, if any of the kids they were working with had been suspended from their school,
Steph and the team would take them to class at Kuyper. “The professors were great,” he said. “They would allow us and even encourage us to bring the kids with us.”

About his time at Kuyper, Steph says: “These were some of the best years of my life. At Kuyper I discovered my gifts and received a biblical foundation that can never be taken away. It was an intense four years of learning and training that prepared me for a lifetime of ministry.”

Since then, God has blessed Steph with 17 years of church ministry as a youth pastor, both in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Chino, California. Through the years, his burden for the lost has continued to grow. Recently he joined the ministry of Young Life. According to him, Young Life is a great vehicle to reach teenagers.

“While in the church, believing is essential; on the mission field of California, it is belonging, that is not only essential, but also imperative,” he said. “The kids I work with want and long to belong. Most of them come from poor and broken homes, lack direction and purpose, are not churched and do not know Christ.”

Steph leads a team of volunteers whose sole purpose is to love kids. “We hang out with kids as they listen to crazy music, talk about what to us are uncomfortable subjects, and show us their true selves,” said Steph. “We let them belong, regardless of what they believe. By doing so, we earn the right to be heard.”

Steph delights in seeing kids come to the realization that the Young Life team members are for real. “You can see it dawn on a kid, when he begins to wonder why in the world we keep hanging around, buying them lunch, taking them on trips, and being truly involved in their lives,” he said. “It is then that they often ask: ‘Why are you doing this?’ And we get to tell them. Many reject Christ and many accept, but they all get to hear the gospel from someone who loves them and has been living it out consistently in front of them for some time. Either way, they still get to belong, regardless of what they believe.”

According to Steph, youth ministry is not easy, and hope is not always evident. Recently he was taking a van-load of kids home from the mountains. They kept talking about their friend, McLovin, whom they were going to meet later that night. Steph asked who McLovin was? “It’s just a nickname for this guy we hang out with,” the kids responded.

“Each day, I try to remember the definition of ministry—God loving others through me. And, each day, I want to stay in ministry by staying in God’s love.”

— Stephen Vander Hart

Jennifer Policow and Professor Hochhalter in Kuyper’s Music Lab

Some of the over 70 teenagers who showed up for a rally in Hollywood

Jennifer Policow and Professor Hochhalter in Kuyper’s Music Lab continued on page 6
On Thursday, February 28, the first of three performances of “The Beams Are Creaking,” an award-winning play about the life of pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, was presented at Kuyper College. The cast, which was comprised of Kuyper College students with only one exception, performed to rave reviews.

The play, directed by Don Huls, Kuyper’s director of drama productions and professor of drama, had two very contrasting acts. In the first act, a series of fast-paced vignettes documented the life of Bonhoeffer as he took on the Nazi Regime and its leader, Adolf Hitler. At first Bonhoeffer did not consider them a serious threat to Germany or the church. Later on, however, he moved from organizing an opposition church alliance to joining the German resistance. When the Nazis began to imprison Jews and promulgate Aryan policies, Bonhoeffer chose to get involved in a plot to assassinate Hitler. The plot failed, and he was imprisoned. The second act took place entirely from Bonhoeffer’s prison cell—a place from where he wrote some of his best works. As the play progressed, the audience gained more insight into the brilliant mind of this extraordinary man of God. Eventually, Bonhoeffer was removed from the prison and taken to Flossenburg, an extermination camp in the Bavarian Forest. On April 9, 1945, three weeks before American forces liberated Flossenburg, he was executed.

Today, the tree from which he was hanged bears a plaque with only ten words inscribed on it: “Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a witness to Jesus Christ among his brethren.”

Steph later found out that the kids had been talking about a planned pot-smoking party.

Yet, Steph says that, through it all, God continues to teach him what’s important. “The bottom line is that if kids are lost and going to hell, pot smoking isn’t their biggest problem,” he said. “Their biggest problem is that they do not know Christ, nor his mercy and grace. We have to show them both by loving them into the Kingdom. Each day, I try to remember the definition of ministry—God loving others through me. And, each day, I want to stay in ministry by staying in God’s love.”
participate in and effect change,” she said. “Change brings growth. We are not a perfect country, but as we continue to change, we can do so for the better.”

Nick Kroeze, Jr., class of 2009, fought side-by-side with Stockeland as a Marine in Iraq. For him, voting is not a requirement, “but a responsibility.” In saying that, Kroeze portrayed a bit of frustration with those who “take voting for granted and do not vote.” He explained, “Whether you vote for the candidate of my choice or not is not the issue; the issue is to exercise our responsibility and vote.”

To Jolona Anderson, class of 2011: “Voting is our way of being heard. My voice, my opinion, it counts. I have a say in who will be the leader of my country. That is very important to me. If you do not vote when you have the opportunity to do so, you do not have the right to disagree later if you do not like the way things are going.”

Even though the students agreed that they do not have a complete understanding from “beginning-to-end” of the election process, they all had strong opinions on specific aspects.

“Early state primaries have an effect on choosing who the candidates of either party will be,” said Kroeze. “That does not afford equal representation to late-primary states. It seems that the decision is made before it gets to them.” To Poulisse, the primaries are a better way to select candidates “than back-room politics.”

However, she did clarify that “At times it is unfortunate we rely only on a two-party system. They narrow our views and serve to put all of us in boxes that sometimes we do not fit.” Finally, to Stockeland, the Electoral College does not make sense. “I’d rather have the presidency decided by majority of popular vote,” he said.

When the conversation turned to the leading candidates for both parties, it soon went in a different direction—and not to policy and platform differences. The students expressed great pride that the country has come a long way on the issues of race and gender.

“I saw black Marines bleed and die in Iraq,” said Kroeze, who himself was critically wounded while serving on the front lines. “If my brother Marines, no matter what the color of their skin, are good enough to bleed and die for their country, then it is high time they are good enough to be president of our country.”

Stockeland concurred: “Our Constitution says that ‘All men are created equal’; until now they were just words on paper. Now, for the first time, they have become reality by what we see happening in our electoral process. It is not going to completely level the playing field but it will help by setting a standard.”

Poulisse agreed: “That as a country we’ve been able to reach this level says a lot about how far we’ve come. However, I would like to see this change of thinking go beyond the presidency into our everyday lives.” To Anderson, what is happening during these elections is a “wow moment” in our history. She always thought that anyone could aspire to the presidency as long as they were white males. “It is amazing that we have the possibility of having either a black man or a woman become president of the United States of America,” she said.

As far as issues, there was consensus among the students as to which were the most pressing. The Iraq War was mentioned as the number one issue facing, and at times dividing, the country, followed by the economy, healthcare, illegal immigration, and the environment.

At the end of the interview the students were asked, “If you had the opportunity to encourage the readership of this article to vote for a particular candidate, whom would it be?” Immediately, Kroeze chimed in with “Vote for . . .,” and then, grinning, did not finish the sentence, leaving the rest of us, and his fellow students, to guess whom he will be voting for in November.

**Elections continued from cover**

2000s

**Naomi (Girwarnauth)**
Sponible (2004) and husband, Steve, welcomed their second son, William John, on August 27, 2007. William weighed 7 pounds, 10 ounces at birth and measured 20 inches long.


**Elizabeth (Markus) Kapenga** (2001) and husband, Aaron, announced the adoption of twin boys from Liberia. Jack and Mark were born March 1, 2006, and arrived home on July 26, 2007. They were welcomed by 4-year-old brother Noah and 2-year-old sister Aubrey.

2010s

**Bethany Karish** (2003) and Josko Vukusic were married September 15, 2007.

1990s

**Sarah (Couwenhoven) Behm** (1996) and husband, Justin, welcomed their second son, Nathan Raymond, on October 15, 2007. Nathan weighed 7 pounds, 9 ounces at birth and measured 20 1/2 inches long.

**David (1994) and Angela (Dorey) (1998) Klompien** joyfully welcomed a fourth child into their family. Luke Timothy was born on August 27, 2007. He weighed 9 pounds, 1 ounce at birth and measured 19 1/2 inches long. Big brothers Micah and Jeremiah, and big sister Elise, are lovingly caring for their baby brother.
CAMREN DE WAARD

HOMETOWN: WAINFLEET, ONTARIO, CANADA

YEAR: CLASS OF 2010

MAJOR: CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES

California, British Columbia, Manitoba, Brazil and Ontario all have something in common to Camren de Waard. “They are places that I’ve called home at one time or another,” he said. “My father is a pastor who attended seminary in California and has shepherded churches in various Canadian cities, including Bethany Reformed Church in Fenwick, which is my home church.” When asked where Brazil fit into this mix, Camren responded—“That comes later.”

Camren recalls growing up in a great Christian home. “To this day we’re very close—my mom, dad, brother and sister,” he said. “When we’re all home, we look forward to Friday because that is game night at the de Waard household. We bring out board and other games and enjoy each other in friendly, but by no means easy, competition.”

While Camren said he had a Christian background and knowledge, his spiritual awakening did not take place until his junior year in high school. “Even though my parents were wonderful Christian role models, I did not feel I owned my faith. It felt as if I was borrowing theirs,” he said. “I realized that I was living as an immature Christian, so I decided to start over. I left the school I had been attending and enrolled at another school where I made a new set of friends. That was the beginning of my true walk with God.” While at school, he helped start a ministry to promote spiritual development among the students. Called “Ignite,” the ministry is still in operation. It was this taste of ministry that propelled Camren to the next level—in Brazil.

“As a result of living in different places, I learned to adapt and be flexible,” said Camren. Moving around had also given him the experience of interacting daily with different cultures and worldviews. So, after graduating from high school, he headed for Recife, northern Brazil, where he spent six months with Youth with a Mission. After attending Discipleship Training School, he hit the streets every day. “I was scared at first because my Portuguese was not very good,” said Camren. “I was way out of my comfort zone as I saw the poverty, both material and spiritual, of the young people on the streets. I kept saying to myself, ‘I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.’ That verse became reality for me in the streets of Recife.”

While in Brazil, he realized that if he was to spend his life ministering to others, he needed an education. Camren has attended Kuyper for the past two years, and during this time, he said he has found spiritual knowledge being taught and, above all, modeled every day. “We have a community of professors and staff who desire to know God fuller and to share him with us students,” he said. “We will leave here not only with academic and spiritual knowledge, but more importantly, with the passion to use both.”

Two more facts give further insight into what makes Camren tick. He is a founding member of the Kuyper College Street Team that ministers every week in some of the roughest neighborhoods of Grand Rapids. He is also a member of the Kuyper Cougars men’s basketball team. How does he make room for studies, ministry, sports and a campus job? “All of it has helped me to grow,” he said. “I’ve been challenged and have had to learn to carefully manage my time—and just as in Brazil, Philippians 4:13 continues to be a daily promise on which I base my life.”