Leading worship at the RYF

The Reformed Youth Forum (RYF) was held in Grand Rapids this past June. It preceded the Uniting General Council, which marked the merging of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Reformed Ecumenical Council into the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The RYF offered a unique opportunity for Christian youth from around the world—North and Latin America, Asia, Europe, Africa and the Pacific Rim countries—to share their dreams and vision for the World Communion and for their own church families and communities.

Kuyper alumna Stephanie Bergman (class of 2010) was a member of the team that spent many weeks planning the worship liturgies for the four-day meeting.

Boots on the campground

Editor's Notes: This past spring, as part of their training, a group of Kuyper students visited several camp facilities and then spent time hiking in Colorado. Josh Westhouse (class of 2010) was part of the group. Below, he writes about his experiences.

Hiking boots...check, polypropylene shirt...check, wool sweater...check, rain gear...check. These are just a few of the things we were told to pack up for our journey into the Rocky Mountains this past spring.

Our trip didn’t start in Colorado. It started by visiting a few local camps to learn why a camp’s programming is set up the way it is. Look at Camp Geneva, Camp Roger, Grace Adventure or Spring Hill for example; they each have their unique list of assets that allows ministry there to be effective. As a youth worker I will set up many retreats and need to do my homework before bringing youth to a site. The first, and probably most critical, question when comparing retreat facilities/camps is to ask, “What are my primary objectives—meaning, what am I trying to accomplish by bringing my group to this particular property? Is it group cooperation? Leadership? Relaxation? Discipleship? Evangelism? Depending on the answer to that question, I can then filter out camps that cater to my intended purpose. It is a mindset of seeing one camp not as better than another, but as one with different focuses and purposes. Having toured these camps, I can then narrow down the options to those that are most likely to provide the experience I am looking for.

Kuyper College equips students with a biblical, Reformed worldview to serve effectively Christ’s church and His world.
The excitement of a new school year has energized the campus with many eager students—freshmen beginning a new phase in their lives and returning students connecting up with good friends and community. We faculty and staff are very enthused to interact with these students once again in the classroom and around the campus as they do as much to motivate us as we them. A good example of this was with the first chapel of the year which was, simply, an open microphone with the invitation to share how anyone had seen God work in/through them over the summer. There was not a moment’s hesitation as student after student came up to share briefly. A clear message was sent about the nature of these students and how free they are to seek and share the presence of Christ no matter where they are! It’s very inspirational!

We shouldn’t be surprised by this. The unique mission of Kuyper with our emphasis on ministry and service certainly works to draw a certain kind of student. The level of spiritual care and mutual encouragement they show toward each other give a pastoral feeling to the campus. At the same time, they create a vibrant and energetic atmosphere through their enthusiasm in responding to what they deeply feel as God’s call in their lives. We faculty and staff are privileged to be part of their lives, as you are as parents, friends and supporters of these students and of the college. I hope you are encouraged as you read the stories in this issue and reflect on how important you are in helping these men and women extend God’s grace into today’s world. Thank you for being part of their—and our—lives in a marvelous way!

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze
President
With respect to number of students, Kuyper is a small school. I see that as good news. God has shown that He is a God who confounds the means and methods of the world’s logic, including the “bigger is better” mentality that pervades much of our culture. Amidst the clamor that constantly demands more of, well, just about everything, God’s kingdom comes not by might, nor by power, but by the ever-fresh breezes from God’s Spirit, who entrusts the treasure of His kingdom to frail jars of clay.

When God wanted to further His purposes, He didn’t choose the awe-inspiring Tower of Babel, but Abraham and his nomadic family. The people of Israel thought having a powerful king like other nations would be best; God allowed this for a time but made clear that His kind of king was a Suffering Servant. When the people mourned the smoldering stones of Solomon’s destroyed temple, God’s mouthpiece Ezekiel promised that God’s people themselves would become God’s dwelling place by having their dead, stony hearts exchanged for hearts alive and beating with the purposeful pulse of God’s Spirit. When Jesus’ disciples clamored for power and Peter rebuked Him for mentioning the possibility of failure, Jesus set his face like flint to endure what looked like the ultimate defeat: death, even death on a cross.

God’s wisdom and power are not the wisdom and power of the world. I am reminded of this daily at Kuyper, because the goal is not more numbers or flashy programs. The goal is not for faculty or students to grab the spotlight of the local or national media. The goal is not to bow to standards that the wider culture would set for us. The goal is both bigger and smaller: to love God and love one another. In training and engaging students, I want them to embrace this goal of loving God and one another, and then realize that this grandiose-sounding goal can only be lived out one concrete situation and decision at a time. It might not have the sparkle and pizzazz that some might like, but the commitment to love God and one another in the little things is what, by God’s grace, makes a big difference in our world.

“In My Words” is a feature of The Kuyper College News highlighting first-person stories by Kuyper College faculty and staff.

A foundation for giving

Kuyper College counts on the success of its annual fund to enhance the education all students receive. Like most institutions, tuition doesn’t cover the full cost of educating a student. Kuyper relies on voluntary charitable support from alumni and friends, private foundations and corporations to help fill the gap between tuition revenue and annual operating expenses. Simply put, support for the annual fund provides Kuyper College the opportunity to become the best college it can be and to educate all who come with a desire to learn from our ministry-focused Christian leadership programs.

Why doesn’t tuition cover everything?

Charging enough tuition to cover total budget expenses would mean that a Kuyper education would be beyond the reach of many students served by the College. The board of trustees is committed to educating students who value and desire a Kuyper education, not just those students who can afford to pay full tuition costs. Tuition, fees, auxiliary enterprises and endowment earnings provide a large percentage of the total operational budget; however, much of the remaining revenue required to operate the College comes from charitable gifts to the annual fund. The annual fund goal for the current year is $850,000.

Who benefits?

The entire Kuyper College community benefits from the gifts to the annual fund. These gifts allow us to keep our tuition significantly lower than at comparable Christian colleges, while providing:

- Scholarship support for many students
- Academic programs which integrate faith and learning
- Outstanding faculty
- Extracurricular programs, including ongoing campus activities, intramural programs, intercollegiate sports and student leadership groups
- Acquisitions and resources for the Zondervan Library
- Continuing education opportunities for faculty
- A safe, spacious and contemporary campus

Why is it important that everyone participate?

All gifts, no matter the amount, positively impact our community, state and the world. Gifts to the annual fund help Kuyper enhance its programs, recruit and retain exceptional faculty, and provide the resources that enable a Kuyper education to produce extraordinary results—as exemplified by our alumni who are serving in over 50 countries throughout the world.

For more information, please contact Ken Capisciolto at 616.988.3676 or e-mail kcapisciolto@kuyper.edu.
To Scott, for a person to have an accurate understanding of New Zealand, they would have to picture a country of exquisite physical beauty, but also an environment where only 14 percent of the people attend any sort of religious worship. This number includes liberal and mainstream denominations, such as Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses, as well as Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu worship services. “This means,” continued Scott, “that evangelical Christians make up less than four percent of the overall population. In addition, while biblical Christianity in New Zealand has been rapidly declining for decades, non-Christian religions are flourishing.”

New Zealand’s 2006 census indicates that many non-Christian religions have experienced significant growth in the past few years, with Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam increasing by 48, 56 and 74 percent, respectively. “The decline in Christianity and biblical influence in New Zealand has had serious social implications,” said Scott. “For example, New Zealand legalized prostitution in 2003, and the 2006 census showed a 31 percent increase in the murder rate, while the suicide rate is one of the highest per capita in the world. From this fuller picture of the life and culture in New Zealand, you can see why this country truly is a mission field.”

Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, few would have predicted that Scott would one day be a missionary. Raised in a single-parent home by his mother, he met his father for the first time when he was 8 years old. “My mother worked hard, often at multiple jobs, trying to provide,” said Scott. “My extended family consisted of my grandparents, with whom I spent a lot of time as a kid, several aunts and uncles, and cousins. I have fond memories of exploring the woods near our house, following the creek across the street from where it left one lake in a splash of waterfalls to where it joined with another lake a mile or so away, and cruising on my bike.”

Scott said he also remembers family get-togethers at least every other week and on holidays. He also said that at home, God, religion and spirituality simply weren’t discussed.

When he hit his teens, things drastically changed in Scott’s life. “I began rebelling and became a parent’s worst nightmare in many respects. I was into everything you wouldn’t want your kids into,” he said. “For a brief time I also experimented with the occult. By the time I was 18, I had been arrested several times and my outlook on life was fairly grim.”

The turning point for Scott came when a cousin invited him to her youth group. “I didn’t have a clue what anyone was talking about. But I had nothing else to do and there were some good looking girls so I decided to go back. Then I went back again, and again,” said Scott. According to him, there was no radical conversion, but a long process helped along by what he describes as a group of people, teens as well as the adult leaders, who seemed genuine.

“I don’t remember one thing that was taught at youth group over those first several months, but I gradually became more and more aware that these people had something that I didn’t have, and I wanted it,” he said. “So I started paying more attention to what was being said, and I even started attending church with them.” Five months after his first visit to the youth group, Scott came to faith in Christ. “The next year was one of intense growth,” he said. “One of the youth leaders bought me a Bible. I had never read the Bible and didn’t know a thing about it. The Spirit sparked a hunger in me, and I began to devour the Word. I started attending church every week and was always at youth group.”

Scott was baptized on Palm Sunday of 1995, and he distinctly remembers that, as the pastor was discussing how Christ’s blood cleanses us and makes us white as snow, it began to snow outside the windows of the sanctuary. “Nothing miraculous, but definitely a poignant memory,” he said.

Later that fall Scott’s pastor challenged him with questions about what he was going to do with his life. Unsure, Scott answered, “I don’t know, maybe youth ministry. With that he asked me a few questions about why I said that and eventually recommended Kuyper to me and suggested that I check it out. I did, and two months later, in January 1996, I began my first classes.”

At Kuyper Scott says he found excellent and engaging professors who cared about him as more than just another student, but as a fellow disciple of Christ. “The academics at Kuyper were challenging and forced me to mature intellectually as well as spiritually,”
“We can’t even make people like us, let alone love Jesus. Therefore, if this ministry is to have any success, it must come from the Lord.”

Travis Scott—New Zealand

he said. “I found openness, vulnerability and authenticity among many of the professors, which helped me to open up and grow in all sorts of ways.” He also speaks of how the professors helped to give him what he describes as the most significant thing he received from the school—an introduction to Reformed theology and worldview. “Coming in as a new Christian, I was very confused as far as my biblical knowledge and theological grounding,” he said. “While at Kuyper I was introduced to the biblical coherence of Reformed and covenantal theology. I can’t summarize how influential this has been to my later education and ministry.”

In 2000 Scott married the former Brooke VanderMeulen (class of 2001). “She is my partner in life and ministry,” said Scott. “If it weren’t for her constant friendship, encouragement, challenge and support, there’s no way I could pursue the ministry I do. While I was in seminary she worked full time as the women’s youth coordinator at a large PCA church. She was amazing at it. She is very active in our current ministry. Although her pace is a bit different now that we have two young children, she still engages in one-on-one discipleship with younger women involved in the church plant, works hard to make our home a place where we can practice biblical hospitality, and finds ways to engage with women outside the church by participating in a local coffee/play group for moms.”

After he graduated with an M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, Scott and his wife spent three months in New Zealand, returning as full-time missionaries under GPCNZ in 2009. “We truly believe that, ‘Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain,’” said Scott (Psalm 127:1). “The task that we have been called to is not merely difficult; it is impossible. It is not within our power to change hearts and minds. We can’t even make people like us, let alone love Jesus. Therefore, if this ministry is to have any success, it must come from the Lord. Our hope is that our work will be founded, built up and sustained on the Lord, working through the prayers of His people—a missional work that seeks to be redemptively engaged with the non-Christian culture it exists in.”

Attempting to bypass the skepticism and to cut through the cynicism towards Christianity and organized religion in Auckland, the church plant, according to Scott, will need to be missional—vulnerable and transparent before the community in which we live. “This means that church leaders and members will need to exhibit consistent honesty, authenticity, sincerity, approachability, service and love in their interactions with other city dwellers,” he said.

Scott describes how they plan to do this by quoting Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer PCA, in New York. “A missional church,” Keller said, “is one that speaks the language, seeks to understand and address the needs and values of the culture at large, while rejecting any division of life into the secular and sacred. It is a church that will equip its people with a fully-orbed Christian worldview that enables them to live the gospel out in every aspect of life. It also develops a community that transcends human expectations and stereotypes, while living out our Christian fellowship in a way that demonstrates the transforming grace of Christ. And finally, a missional church seeks to demonstrate biblical unity by working with other Christians of different traditions to accomplish kingdom tasks.”

“By God’s grace,” said Scott, “that is the kind of church we are striving to make at City Presbyterian—not our church, but God’s church!”

Discussion time during a house church meeting
Flour power

**Editor’s Note:** Eric (class of 2002) and Julie (Wiersma) (class of 2003) Shalk are leaders of a results-oriented ministry—New City Neighbors—in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Recently, one of the programs for which they are responsible was featured in the West Michigan Christian News. With permission from the publication and Eric and Julie, the adapted article is reprinted below.

From June 21 to August 6, 12 inner-city teenagers were involved in a unique bakery program—part entrepreneur school and part spiritual boot camp. They spent mornings planning, baking, selling goods to the public and cleaning up. Eric Shalk, coordinator for the New City Neighbors (NCN), a non-profit ministry working in the Creston neighborhood of Grand Rapids, runs the program.

The young people learn cleanliness, organizational and management skills, customer relations and marketing. According to Shalk, more often than not, the teens learn more about dealing with each other than about baking. “The bakery is full of life lessons that help students grow holistically,” he said. “Something about working in a bakery lends itself to hands-on teachable moments. Kids work in close proximity, so relationship problems must be dealt with. I am available after bakery hours for counseling too. Kids journal each day; they learn about themselves, especially in relation to Jesus. ‘What does it mean to be a follower of Christ?’ is a big theme,” said Shalk.

He added: “It’s amazing to watch teens grow in self-confidence. In the beginning, there is awkwardness and nervousness. By the end of summer, they have so much more confidence, to the point of policing themselves when issues arise.”

The day starts at the bakery at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The typical day begins with 15 minutes of devotional time, and then it’s time to bake until noon. After a half-hour for lunch, the teens take turns running the store, taking inventory, doing the dishes, and cleaning the kitchen from top to bottom. “We emphasize teamwork and teach them to proactively look for other work to do after finishing each of their assigned tasks,” said Schalk.

The fresh baked goods are sold from a small store right inside the Fourth Reformed Church at 1226 Union NE starting at 12:30 p.m. each day, and usually all baked goods are sold out within an hour.

Shalk’s wife, Julie, who is also involved in the program, said that she and Eric are in this ministry because this is what God has called them to do. She explained: “I am so glad to see the minds of my small group of girls searching to make sense of how God works. I rejoice when I see some of my girls sharing with others how God loves them, and if they need us they’ll come back and find us ... and more importantly, they’ll find Jesus.”

Hiking continued from cover

properties I feel far more prepared to pick a facility that meets my ministry needs.

Now to our time in Colorado backpacking for three days. We experienced a bit of everything on that mountainside. Rain, sunshine, snow and plenty of time spent sharing our life stories around meals. Life stories are what impacted me the most when I think back on the whole trip. Understanding where someone came from is arguably just as important as knowing his or her name. To really minister to others and love them, we need to listen to the story of their journey first. This is how Jesus spent His time with people. He loved them through their experiences, challenging them to leave their old lives behind and showing Himself to those with whom He lived. Our role is to follow His wisdom and go and do likewise.

Worship continued from cover

“I didn’t know what to expect,” said Stephanie as she prepared for her first planning meeting. “I had told the Kuyper students who were joining the worship band that would provide music during the worship sessions that it would be a great opportunity to meet new people and gain experience in global worship planning.” According to Bergman, the RYF turned out to be much more. “It wasn’t just an opportunity to meet new people or gain experience,” she said. “My eyes were opened to what I imagine worship in heaven will be like. When I was able to look beyond the long meetings, the producing of many PowerPoint presentations, and the countless hours leading practice sessions, all I saw when I looked around were worshiping faces that radiated the joy of the Lord. There truly were people from every tongue, tribe and nation putting barriers aside and worshipping the God who created us all. That was the best part of this experience. In addition, participating in the RYF allowed each of us to put into practice what we learned at Kuyper.”
The 18th Annual Kuyper International Golf Invitational was held on Monday, August 30th. For the first time ever, a lady golfer, Nancy Crumback, won the coveted Presidential Putter with a putt of 16 feet, nine inches, on the 18th green. The putter, hand-made of seven different woods by Kuyper President Nick Kroeze, symbolizes the seven different continents from which Kuyper students come and on which Kuyper alumni are serving.

Kuyper College president fashions wood carvings with sacred significance is the headline that accompanied an article in The Grand Rapids Press, on Saturday, September 4, featuring Nick Kroeze and the sculptures and other artwork he creates using wood. For a full copy of the article go to the News & Events section on Kuyper’s Website (Home Page) at www.kuyper.edu

Blood Drive—sponsored by the Student Activities Committee and Michigan Blood—Tuesday, October 19, 2010, in the Boonstra Fitness Center from 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Annual Scholarship Dinner—Thursday, October 21, 2010, in the Walters Dining Hall. This dinner is open to scholarship donors and the students who receive endowed scholarships.

Student Recital—Monday, November 29, 2010, in the Vos Chapel at 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

Christmas Concert—Sunday, December 5, 2010, in the Vos Chapel at 3:00 p.m.

Kuyper Visit Days—Schedule can be found at www.kuyper.edu/visit

Sports Schedules
Soccer-Volleyball-Basketball: www.kuyper.edu/athletics

Faculty retreat
“As an institution we desire to find ways to internationalize our campus,” said Dr. Mel Flikkema, provost at Kuyper College. As an example, Dr. Flikkema cited a faculty proposal for what may prepare for the work they will do after they graduate—in some cases, in different countries and cultures around the world.

This emphasis on internationalization was also very evident during the staff retreat held this past August. David Livermore, Ph.D., was one of the featured speakers.

Livermore is the executive director of the Global Learning Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. During the retreat Livermore spoke on how to engage and serve the needs of a multicultural world, not only in other countries, but within the borders of the United States as well.

Births:
Dan and Torey (VanArkel) Kittleson (2003), along with big sister Hailey, welcomed home Michael Thomas, born on May 4, 2010.


Tim Sliedrecht (2000) and his wife, Angie, along with big sister Avalien and big brother Moses, welcomed Zulea Marie, born March 7, into their family on June 15, 2010.


Professional Achievements:
Lynde Kammeraad (2005) was installed as senior pastor at Christ Community Church in Grand Rapids on Sunday, May 23, 2010.

Rick Kiektinvelt (1973) has accepted the position of spiritual care coordinator/chaplain for Baruch Senior Ministries.

Nathan VanderMolen (2004) has accepted a call to serve as director of youth ministry at Messiah CRC in Hudsonville, MI.

Michael (2009) and Megan (Boer) VanMaanen (2010) have moved to Nonthaburi, Thailand, as teachers with Global English School.

With the Lord:


Growing up in Lansing, Michigan, Matthew Rahme had a less than rosy life. When he was young his parents divorced, leaving Matt and his brother confused and without the influence of a man at home. “I look back now and can honestly say that my mom is the strongest person I know for what she has been through and how hard she worked for us kids,” said Matt. “Even though I was not living right and made it very difficult for her at times, she loved us and sacrificed for us.”

Matt was introduced to Christ by his stepfather’s brother who, after graduating from Dallas Theological Seminary, became a youth pastor in a Lansing church and a teacher of Bible at Lansing Christian High School. “My uncle Cove began to disciple me, and I started to get it,” said Matt. “I wanted to change, and change for good. I wanted to get to know this God that my uncle was so passionate about. But I knew that to achieve what I needed, I would have to go to a different school in order to avoid anything that could distract me from my path of faith.” In the second semester of his sophomore year, Matt entered Lansing Christian High School, where he not only worked hard at his studies, but also played on the varsity basketball team.

During his junior and senior years, Matt had a few schools that were recruiting him, but a call from Kuyper’s basketball coach made all the difference. “After accepting an invitation from the coach to visit Kuyper, I felt Kuyper was the place where God wanted me to grow in my faith and learn more about His will for my life,” said Matt. According to him, during his first visit, the people at Kuyper made him feel very welcomed. “It was almost like they knew me already. I could tell God was working in Kuyper, and I wanted to be a part of it.”

In coming to Kuyper Matt said he hoped to accomplish three main things. “First and foremost,” he said, “was to strengthen my faith in God and learn more about my calling to youth ministry. Second, was to meet people who have the same desire for God as I do and to build friendships and relationships that will last a lifetime. And third, to become equipped for ministry after graduation.” Matt said he has not been disappointed.

“From Kuyper I have received, through my first year, a clearer vision of what God wants for my life and out of my ministry,” he said. “Kuyper equipped me, so far, with Bible knowledge beyond what I could ever imagine. I also have learned a lot about myself—my strengths and flaws, and how I go about life and living for Christ.” As for the people he found at Kuyper, Matt says that everyone not only loves God, but lives their lives out of that love. “The first thing I found at Kuyper were people who had a passion to serve God in any way they could,” said Matt. “From people with musical talent, to future pastors, to business students, they all want to glorify and build God's kingdom no matter what they do. And that includes the Kuyper faculty. The academics at Kuyper are tough, but they are made easier because the professors care so much. I know that sounds simple, but caring about students has a big effect on us when it comes to learning.”

Matt is currently a youth pastor intern at River Terrace Church in East Lansing—his home church. “My dream and my calling is to be a youth pastor,” he said. “Ministry isn’t a job; it is a calling, a lifestyle—the way you walk through everyday life, reflecting Jesus Christ in everything you do and say.”