A celebration of God’s faithfulness

“We honor the past, and we envision the future. But today, in this generation, God is expecting us to be faithful in prayer, diligent in work, and true to His calling. We are to remain mindful that we are not building a college; we are building His kingdom—bringing God’s grace into today’s culture.” The preceding quote is an excerpt from Kuyper President Nick Kroeze’s letter in the summer 2009 edition of The Kuyper College News. He wrote it in celebration of Kuyper’s 70th anniversary. Today, we are on the eve of Kuyper’s 75th anniversary, and nothing that he wrote then has changed. As a matter of fact, with each passing year, the call to build His kingdom becomes more urgent as communities throughout the world yearn for meaning and truth.

Throughout the coming year, we will be celebrating Kuyper College’s 75th anniversary in many ways—big and small. Special events, sections of The Kuyper College News, a commemorative book, banners and more will help us celebrate the past, present and future. But more importantly, all of it will serve as a daily reminder that it is only by His grace and for His glory that Kuyper has been, for the past eight decades, a vibrant, kingdom building community and testimony to His faithfulness.

Variations on God’s theme—then and now

In 1949, after I completed third grade, my family immigrated to Canada. That first year of school was difficult. We wore clothing from the Netherlands, which was not in style and set us apart. Also, because we did not speak English, the only class I understood was math. With the help of a Dutch neighbor boy, I was assigned to read first grade reading books—“Run Dick, Run, Run Jane, Run.” It helped, and it did not take long to learn the language.

In Canada, we attended the Christian Reformed Church. And while my father did not talk about his personal faith journey, we always had devotions after mealtimes at home. He would open with the Lord’s Prayer in Dutch and read us a portion of the Bible in his native tongue. During my childhood years, he read from a Dutch children’s Bible that I treasured and presently own. The pages are tattered, but it holds rich memories for me. My mother, in contrast, was the opposite. She was a pious woman. While working around the house, she would frequently sing Dutch psalms from memory—not one stanza but all of them. If she was not pleased with my behavior, she would read a devotional in the morning before I went off to school, give a brief “sermon” about my attitude or actions, and then offer a prayer.

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ministry and service around the world. I recall one session especially that took us through a look at “the great cloud of witnesses” from Hebrews 11. The point was made that these were not just faithful servants residing in an ancient story, but that their testimony is very much a part of all witness—and witnesses—that have unfolded over history and which envelopes you and me today. That session ended with us singing “For All the Saints.” That piece, in fact, became background for a video presentation of the song and theme that you can still access (http://2100.intervarsity.org/resources/all-saints).

With the 75th anniversary of Reformed Bible Institute-Reformed Bible College-Kuyper College being celebrated this school year, I have reflected much on “the cloud of witnesses” that have been part of this institution since 1939. Really, I’d have to say, “for a few years before that, yet,” as I consider the spirit and vision that was burning in the hearts of our founders and their supporters. Kuyper College certainly has been blessed with a heritage that is so solidly founded on God’s Word and His call to be active in the world for the sake of Christ Jesus. Those founders, the students, the staff, the faculty, the trustees, the donors, and the prayer warriors are still a vital part of who we are and what we are doing today. They are not just faithful servants residing in the old story of Kuyper’s past—their vision is very much alive in the mission the College has carried forward to this very day. We can thank and praise God for that!

You will note the specific way this issue of The Kuyper College News highlights the importance of those who have gone before us and how connected they are with those who are just graduating out our doors in this era of the College. We are part of a body—the body of Christ—that transcends time. As such, we value as much what those in the past have accomplished as well as express enthusiasm for what those in the present are accomplishing now for the sake of Christ. Please know too that you, in your relationship with Kuyper, will always remain as a valued, appreciated and honored part of our history who will continue to speak into the lives of students who will be here for generations to come. We can thank and praise God for that!

Thank you!

Dr. Nicholas V. Kroeze
President

New provost

Dr. Patricia R. Harris has been appointed to the post of provost at Kuyper College. She will be responsible for providing leadership to and directing all academic areas of the College. She comes to Kuyper after spending the last 14 years in cross-cultural mission work in the Philippines with Christian Reformed World Missions, in partnership with Asian Theological Seminary (ATS) in Manila. During that time, in addition to her responsibilities as a professor of biblical studies and Christian education, Dr. Harris also served as vice president of administration and, most recently, as dean of special programs at the Seminary.

In a letter addressed to Kuyper’s president and board of trustees, the chair of the Provost Search Committee spoke for all its members when he wrote: “Early on in our selection process the Committee identified several qualities and characteristics that were desired in the ideal candidate. After prayerful consideration, a thorough review of information from all candidates and feedback received from across the community, the Search Committee unanimously recommends that the President and the Board of Trustees select Dr. Patricia R. Harris as the next provost for Kuyper College. Not only does Dr. Harris exhibit each of the desired characteristics, but she also brings a strong passion for and understanding of the unique mission, character and calling of Kuyper College.”

“That our new provost has the stature and proven record of achievement of Dr. Harris affirms God’s provision and direction for our College,” said Nick Kroeze, Kuyper’s president. “We are thrilled to welcome her to the Kuyper community and look forward to her contributions to the continued robust growth of our quality academic programs.”

Commenting on her appointment, Dr. Harris said: “I value the fervency of Kuyper’s mission to prepare the next generation of Christian leaders to serve Christ and His kingdom. I count it a humble privilege to be able to participate in helping the Kuyper community fulfill its mission and vision.”

Dr. Harris holds a Doctorate in Education from George Fox University, a Master of Theological Studies from Calvin Theological Seminary, and a B.A. in Elementary Education from Calvin College.

Dr. Harris and her husband, Rev. Robert Harris, are the parents of three sons and one daughter.
In My Words: The experimental knowledge of God
Dr. George Kroeze—Professor, Biblical Studies—1973-1999

In 1969, on the 30th anniversary of RBI/RBC, I was invited to become a member of the board of trustees. Serving on the board from 1969-1973 gave me the opportunity to meet several of the founders of the College. A number of them, like Rev. John Schaal, Rev. William Van Peursem, Rev. Oren Holtrop and Pat Zondervan, were still living. The late ‘60s were challenging years for the College when the board seriously considered closing the school. But during the ‘70s God gave a renewed interest among prospective students to attend our college, and the enrollment increased significantly for a few years to nearly 250 students.

I was privileged to be the chairman of the Long-Range Planning Committee during those years, and our work resulted in the erection of a few new buildings on the Robinson Road campus, like Schaal Hall and the Walters Campus Center. When Rev. Schaal, an original board member and teacher on the faculty (1948-1973), retired, I was invited to succeed him on the faculty. I continued to teach Biblical Studies for 26 years until my own retirement in 1999. It was a happy and rewarding experience.

Through the years a question has often occurred to me—what was the theological and spiritual root which motivated these founding board members to begin RBI in 1939? I strongly suspect that they were intellectually and spiritually children of the Dutch piety associated with historic Calvinism of the 17th-19th century. It was a piety that espoused experimental Christianity, including personal conversion, love for the Scriptures, a call to witness, purity of life, and a firm hope in the second coming of Christ. These writers, as well as the first leaders at RBI, believed that the best expression of one’s religion is concerned with what one Puritan called “the life of God in the soul of man.” It has often been stressed that RBI was formed for the practical purpose of training lay leadership. But in various early publications of the school, the appeal was made for students to come to study for personal spiritual benefits. This theological thought and spiritual commitment adopted by the founding board predated the Neo-Calvinism introduced by Abraham Kuyper.

In the historic context of 1939, it was well known that the educational mission of Calvin College was guided by the worldview ideas of Kuyper, particularly as he expressed in his “Stone Lectures” delivered at Princeton Seminary in 1898. The educational goals of Calvin were built around a robust vision of active Christian involvement in public life. They did not have a vision to train lay leaders for the church and mission fields. Therefore, these early board members of RBI were moved to begin a new institution to, above all, inculcate genuine piety in the life of students and prepare them for lay leadership in the gospel ministry. This ministry, in effect, preserved the old Dutch piety of an earlier generation.

The predominant emphasis of Kuyper’s theology in our present historical context continues to be on his worldview ideas. Christians are a leaven who need to invade all spheres of human activity. But there is another side to Kuyper’s life and thought that is often neglected. His life was characterized by a beautiful, genuine piety which he first saw in the devotion of the simple believers of his early pastorate. This experience led to his own conversion. Kuyper wrote of this personal piety in his work, “To

In My Words
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Stewardship: Living in a place called trust

Asking you to trust Kuyper with your money is akin to a story we came across the other day.

A young lady was sunbathing on the beach when a little boy in his swimming trunks came up and asked her, “Do you believe in God?” Surprised by the question, she replied, “Why yes, I do.” Then he asked, “Do you read your Bible and pray every day?” Again she said, “Yes!” By now her curiosity was very much piqued. The little lad sighed with relief and said, “Okay then, will you hold my money while I go swimming?”¹

In essence, the boy is asking, “Do you value God more than you value my money?” Because the lady said yes, the boy trusted her. This reminds us of Solomon asking God first for godly wisdom, only to find God entrusting him also with wealth. The story also raises a question you could, and should, be asking of us: “Is God primary in the life of Kuyper College?” The answer to that question—emphatically “yes!”—is why you can, with certainty and enthusiasm, trust Kuyper with your money.

For more information on the many ways you can make a gift to Kuyper College contact your financial advisor or IRA administrator. They may tell you about a one-time charitable gift, inclusion of Kuyper in your will, or the new legislation that extends the IRA charitable rollover gift allowing you the benefits of donating tax-free, a gift from a traditional IRA account.

If you have any questions or would like a free copy of a special bulletin, “One Giant Leap in the Journey of Faith,” contact Ken Capisciolto at 616.988.3676 or kcapisciolto@kuyper.edu.

¹(Source: “Confrontation” by Gordon Curley)
The small size of the school educational backgrounds. North America with varying from Asia, Europe and conglomeration of individuals to 50 and was composed of a body ranged in age from 19 of 1960. The 106 student of God.”

After that, the Lord guided us through Dordt and Calvin Colleges and Calvin Seminary, and pastorates in Belding, Michigan; Bellingham, Washington; and a call to Hospice Grand Rapids as director of bereavement services. After that, He led us to Calvin CRC, where I served as minister of congregational life until 2005, and where I now serve as minister of pastoral care.

While God has used me to make a difference in some lives in the past and continues to do so in the present, I wonder what these last years on earth will bring. Will I be able to stay alert to God’s presence and maintain a sense of purpose? I cling to the promise of Isaiah 46:4—“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am He, I am He who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you.”

**Jeff Kroondyk**

*Class of 2008*

My parents are standout Christians, and God has always been number one in their lives. They raised my two brothers and me to believe the same, with devotions and prayer life a crucial part of our family life, and they made sure we were in church on Sundays and Wednesdays. As we grew up, my brothers and I became very involved with church and youth group activities. We went on mission trips and fun trips with the youth group together and separately, each of us pursuing God and stretching our faith.

School was difficult for me growing up. Most of it was due to a “gift” of squirminess and energy. This frequently led to me annoying other kids. I did pursue sports and music in school, but I didn’t have the discipline to really do well. So, in high school, church and youth group became my favorite activities.

As a kid a major part of my time was spent at Sunday school, kids choir, and Vacation Bible School. Later in youth group I gained a great deal of knowledge of God and Scripture. However, it wasn’t until middle school youth group that I made that knowledge something personal to me. Between seventh and eighth grade, we had an all-nighter lock-in event. Sometime close to midnight, a youth leader led us in a Bible study. She asked if we knew for sure that we were going to heaven when we died. Since I had been so involved with church my whole life, I
knew what we were supposed to believe, but I wasn’t sure that we could really know for sure. As I expressed my doubt, she prayed with me and encouraged me that Scripture in fact teaches that we can know for sure. That night, mostly because God placed that youth leader in my life, I believed for the first time that Jesus truly was my Lord and Savior and that God was indeed the one true God.

I entered college directly from high school, and since my mother worked at Calvin College, I could have gone there with a significant staff discount. However, the more I prayed about it and thought about it, I knew I wanted to study youth ministry, and Kuyper was the best place to do it.

I always had a misunderstanding of what college really was. I naively thought of it as a place where I would take the classes I was told to take in order to get a youth ministry degree, and when I was done, I would have everything I needed to be a youth pastor forever. Yet, when I came to Kuyper, I found I was wrong. It wasn’t just about getting a degree; it was about being formed into who God had made us to be. I found an incredible community of people that wanted to live their lives in everything they did for the glory of God. I met friends who took risks in order to share the gospel and their lives with people who had never met God. I saw people who had faith like children and weren’t afraid to follow God wherever He led them. I sat under professors and staff who were passionate about meeting college-aged students and encouraging them in their walks with God. They encouraged students to look for God in the smallest things and the biggest things. And while the academics at Kuyper were challenging, perhaps they were more encouraging and useful. The things I learned in classes were practical and made a difference in how I live my life and how I do ministry.

I will never forget Brian Telzerow, who gave me an incredible amount of practical skills and helpful thought processes; Dan Kroeze, who challenged me in biblical understanding and how to really look at Scripture in new ways; and Doug Felch, who amazed me with his ability to help students understand some doctrines that can be quite difficult to comprehend—and he always did it with humor. The integrity and lessons taught by them will always remain at the forefront of my thinking and ministry. Kuyper formed within me a desire to share the grace God has given me with others in this world. It also gave me the skills and knowledge of how to do that effectively. I would not have survived seminary without the foundation that I received at Kuyper.

After Kuyper, I attended Western Theological Seminary where I met my wife, Katy—we were married in May of 2011. While in seminary I spent one year in an internship at a Spanish-speaking church plant, a summer with a social work agency—Good Samaritan Ministries, two years with a multicultural, parish-style church in Holland—New Community 4th Reformed, a summer in Zion National Park working with A Christian Ministry in the National Parks (ACMNP), and one year working at Holland Hospital as a student chaplain. Through those experiences, it became clear to me that God’s call in my life is to walk alongside people in times of transition, listening to them, and helping them hear God’s voice.

Realizing that youth are always in transition and my training in youth ministry would be perfect for listening to them and walking with them as they grow and mature, in August 2012, I began to serve as a pastor to youth and their families at Cadillac CRC. This past May, I was ordained as a minister of the Word and am now the associate pastor to youth and their families at the church.

As I look ahead, I do not know what the future holds—only God knows. One thing I do know—I am grateful to Kuyper for giving me a solid foundation of deep biblical knowledge, doctrinal understanding, spiritual disciplines, practical skills, and eyes for God’s work in this world.
Theorms for students attending RBI were located about a mile west of the campus. The dining hall for the two women’s dorms and one men’s dorm was located in the basement of the 1230 Lake Drive dorm. So those who lived at the 1245 dorm and the men’s dorm had to cross busy Lake Drive to have meals. This meant that at least 15 - 30 minutes prior to meal time, we would gather in the living room waiting for the bell to ring. In the meantime, waitresses were setting the tables and bringing out the food for the family-style meals. Once the bell rang, the hungry students would come down to stand at the table, not being able to sit until the head hostess at the head table made the first move and did so. Of course this was not done until our beloved cook, Miss Brower, was ready to join us—yes our cook ate with us at the table. A student was assigned to open with prayer. All eyes were on the head table—watching for the head hostess as she began to pass the plates of food. Going back for refills was done by the waitress at each table. Before desserts, the table was cleared by the waitress. Oh yes, there were procedures we had to follow for that also—clearing the table on the left and serving the dessert on the right of the diners. When the meal was done, our napkins had to be neatly folded and placed beside our empty plates. It was only then that devotions could be held.

Classes, dorm life, local Christian service assignments, friendships—still strong today—are all memories of my four years at RBC. However, my most life-changing memories are connected with my internship in Alexandria, Egypt. This was before the security of group trips. Dr. Van Halsena arranged for me to spend five months with a missionary who was ministering to the English-speaking groups in Alexandria. Of course, even the best plans have glitches—so I arrived in Cairo at midnight with no one to meet me. It was more than a bit scary for this first-time international traveler. No language communications, no friends, no luggage for six weeks, and then I became sick. I remember opening the shutters to let in the light, as well as the flies and the smells of the noisy street of Alexandria. All my senses reminded me of what I did NOT have. I had nothing familiar, and I felt very alone. And then I was struck with a very basic truth about who God is—something I had known nearly all my life. However, this truth of a never-changing, faithful God being with me was never so real. I learned a bit of the language, became more immune to the “bugs” that had made me sick, made friends, and even became adjusted to the smells of the city. But more importantly, I had His Word, and I had His presence—even during those lonely moments, I really did have everything I needed. And I still do!

I can still fondly remember sitting in Lyle Bierma’s Doctrine class and just being so struck by how AMAZING God is—and though we were studying the theology of God, I was overwhelmed with the love, goodness and sense of order of our Creator. Professor Bierma was also obviously wowed by this and in love with it too...as it came out in his teaching. The same was true with all the professors.....Dr. Hertel and his passion for evangelism and teaching TRUTH, Dr. Kroeze and his love for the GOSPELS and the stories and details in them, Dr. Shell for his passion for Scripture memorization, and Pat Tichelaar for her love for literature. I always felt that, even in reading literature and studying children’s classics, she always pointed to the GLORY of God—the great creator of ART. Oh, and I cannot forget Dr. Flikkema, who was passionate about getting us OUT there....and connected. And then, during my era, there was Ed Roels, the gentle shepherd among them all. Every professor at school was passionate about what they taught and was always ready to truly give God all the glory. And let’s not forget June Ellison, who made the cafeteria not only a place to eat, but a place of grace and worship and constant recognition of how GREAT her God was! Finally, the student body! I simply loved the mix, the diversity. Every tribe and nation was truly reflected. And I felt like there was so much to learn from every one of them...to understand and to grow in grace. This too was awesome.
**Class Notes**

**Marriages:**

Nate Miller and Jessica Monroe (2013) were married on June 8, 2013.

Benjamin Bouwkamp (2013) and Rebekah Stephenson (2013) were married on July 20, 2013.

Brock Orlowski (2013) and Abby Smith were married on July 27, 2013.

Jonathon VanderWall (2010) and Bethany Utting were married on August 10, 2013.

Nathan Kroeze (2013) and Holly Gritter were married on September 7, 2013.

**Births:**


Adam (2008) and Ashley (Emerson) Spitzner (2009), along with big sister Rebekah, welcomed Edan Leanne into their family on June 3, 2013.


Ben (2010) and Amy (Lutke) Jacobs (2011) were blessed with a baby boy, Gabriel Andrew, on July 6, 2013.

Josh Westhouse (2010), his wife, Alison, and daughter, Annika, welcomed Bently James into their family on August 3, 2013.

Robert (2013) and Rachel (Dykstra) De Graff welcomed Rozemarijn Lorraine into their family on August 13, 2013.

**Professional Developments:**

Robert Bergman (2010) received a Master of Social Work degree at Western Michigan University.

Becky (Sikkes) VandenHoek (2011) received a Master of Social Work degree from Western Michigan University in June and has joined the staff of ProtoCall Services.

Alyssa (Vander Heide) Blom (2013) has joined the Kuyper College Advancement Office.

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**In My Words**

Be Near God.” This work was published after his years as prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905) and consists of 110 meditations on Psalm 73:28: “But as for me, it is good to be near God.” In this book he speaks of “experimental knowledge of God, which comes to us personally from spiritual experience, from communion of saints and secret fellowship with God.” It is this side of the life and thought of Abraham Kuyper that is most akin to the motivation and passion of the earliest leaders of RBI/RBC. And it is that experimental Christianity of Abraham Kuyper that can still be the background and inherent energy for the continuing life of Kuyper College today.

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

Luke Carrig
Greystones, Co. Wicklow, Ireland
Class of 2016
Major: Music & Worship/Pre-Seminary

I grew up attending church and being a part of a Christian community. I went to all the pizza nights, the midnight rambles, on camping trips, and received my fair share of evangelistic “starter packs.” My mother made a valiant effort to keep me and my siblings close to and aware of what she believed was the purpose of her existence—the foundation of her hope—bringing us to church with her all the time. And when I was a child, I believe that I engaged and understood my faith with the capacity a child has to understand his faith. My teen years brought teen choices. I made some good ones, and I made bad ones. Some were bad enough to think that I had abandoned my faith altogether, but never bad enough to think that God had abandoned me. In the midst of my naïve decisions, there was always that beautiful voice calling me to something better, something hopeful and wholesome. The more I look back at people who came into my life and events that were formative to my faith, the more I realize that God is very much with us, and there are questions I won’t know the answer to, but that grace is sufficient to give me peace.

After I graduated from high school, I interned with a youth organization in Ireland for a year. I then worked as a special needs assistant in a residential home run by Christians. I briefly spent time in London recording with a band, touring and releasing some music. This is an interest I continue to explore, but it is less of a priority now. I did apply my musical abilities to leading worship for about two years at the Nazarene Community Church in Greystones, Ireland. During that time I also worked as a fish merchant at a local shop in my hometown.

My wife, Kelsey, who is a Holland, Michigan, native, and I got married in August of 2012. Because in Ireland there is not an extensive range of opportunities to study Christian ministry at an accredited level, we decided to stay in the States. So you may ask—why Kuyper and not another school? Honestly, I began to Google colleges in West Michigan, and Kuyper was one of the first to show up on my browser. I clicked, read, and was impressed by the courses offered and also by the cost. So I applied, and Kuyper accepted me. The support I received from the Kuyper staff and the Kuyper faculty before arriving on campus was efficient, welcoming and encouraging. So I saw no need to apply anywhere else.

Upon my arrival at Kuyper, I thought I would not fit in. I had been out of an academic setting for nearly five years, was from Ireland, a little older than most freshmen students, married and talked funny. Yet, I was invited into the Kuyper family, a vibrant community of faith, a place of support, of diversity, and of wholesome learning with laughter, generosity and kindness. I have met people at Kuyper that I believe will be a constant source of friendship and community for years to come.

I’ve found Kuyper to be a place where both academics and spirituality are nurtured, encouraged and strengthened. But at first, because I do not come from a Reformed background, I was worried about classroom discussions and certain theological points. Yet, I found the opposite. I’ve been energized by the wholesome, gracious dialogues I have in and out of class. The professors facilitate learning in a way that helps students journey through their own thought processes and arrive at their own conclusions—even if they are sometimes contrary to theirs and other students’ opinions. Yet, more often than not, I find agreement with my professors.

My wife and I are still unsure about what we will do after I graduate. What I am sure of is that I hope to serve in a full-time Christian ministry of some sort—and will be able to do so because of the influence Kuyper has had on my faith and life.