

KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Peter Hofman, Chaplain (Maj.) U.S. Army, setting up communion table on the front line for the troops he serves.

OUR STORIES

CHAPLAINS

Kuyper alumni Valjean Wykstra, Peter Hofman and Rick Keikintveld all have one thing in common—chaplaincy. Although this story is about them, it represents the story of several other alumni who are, or have been, chaplains.



Valjean Wykstra

Chaplain Baruch Senior Ministries

Valjean Wykstra CLASS 2010
Chaplain Baruch Senior Ministries

I am originally from Chicago, Illinois, where I grew up attending church twice on Sunday, going to Sunday school and catechism. I also attended a Christian grade school. My dad died of a heart attack when I was 9 years old, so my mom raised my sister and me. We moved to Michigan when I was 13.

I married my husband, a field service engineer, a year after high school and had two sons. In 2009, my husband was diagnosed with cancer and died ten months later.

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JOIN THE CONVERSATION



KUYPER.EDU

“What I want and what God has called me to are not always the same thing. I love what I am doing for Jesus.”

On a recent trip to central Minnesota, I had lunch with a group of church and civic leaders. In opening devotions, one leader shared his story of being called into ministry. His calling started when he was a young teen and said “Yes” to Jesus Christ at a church event, but it solidified when, as a college student, he said “No” to receiving a full scholarship to a prestigious doctoral program. He explained that his decision wasn’t easy and seemed foolish to so many people, but he knew God was leading him on a different path—a path to full-time Christian ministry.

This church leader went on to share that, in retrospect, he has had no regrets, for he has witnessed God’s faithfulness and leading in ways he never could have asked

or imagined. He loves what he is doing for Jesus!

My heart swelled as I listened to his story. It reminded me of my “Yes” to God’s calling in my life at a young age, and my “No,” in my junior year of college to transferring to a different school. Through my “No,” God affirmed a path of Christian ministry through education and missions, which would eventually lead me to Kuyper College. I love what I am doing for Jesus!

“I have learned that what I want and what God has called me to are not always the same thing. I love what I am doing for Jesus.” Valjean Wykstra makes this statement in the cover story. She, Peter Hofman and Rick Keikintveld all said



“Yes” to God’s call to be chaplains. Their pain and loss in their early lives could easily have led them to say “No,” but God had His grip on them. They love what they are doing for Jesus!

I hope your hearts swell as you read their stories and the stories of Christine Mulka and Kandi Zeller who also said “Yes” to God’s calling. And I ask you to pray for our 40 graduates who have said “Yes” to God’s calling—that they will love what they do for Jesus as they go and serve within every square inch of His Church and his world.

Grateful to serve,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patti".

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

Kuyper Community Notes

Births

Matthew (2014) and **Lori Hochhalter** (2014) welcomed Jeremiah, age 4, and Josiah, age 3, into their family through adoption.

Ricardo and **Jessica (Quado) Ortiz** (2004) welcomed home their first child, Samuel, on December 14, 2018.

Campus Events

June 21
Journey

August 16
Journey

August 26
Kuyper College International Golf Scramble

August 27-30
Week of Welcome

Kuyper College's Social Work Program Ranked Among 10 Best in Michigan

Zippia, Inc., one of the leading companies providing career web-based information and tools for professionals across various industries, including higher education, analyzed data from colleges and universities in Michigan to determine which programs offer the best career opportunities for social work majors.

The Kuyper College social work program is ranked among the best.

1. Michigan State University
2. Hope College
3. Ferris State University
4. Grand Valley State University
5. Madonna University
6. Oakland University
7. Central Michigan University
8. Spring Arbor University
9. Saginaw Valley State University
10. **Kuyper College**

According to Zippia, “graduates from each school on the list would not be surprised at the rankings.”

How Zippia Determined the Best Social Work Schools in Michigan

When it came to identifying the best social work schools, Zippia approached the ranking in a scientific way—looking at data on how schools perform and comparing them to one another. They analyzed data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. They also analyzed data

from the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard (ED.gov) designed to help students and families compare how well individual postsecondary institutions are preparing their students to be successful. The data reported on school's academics, costs, student body, financial aid, completion of degree, earnings, debt after graduation and loan repayment rates. The results included:

- **Career**
 - Mean earnings after six years
 - Mean earnings after 10 years
 - Ratio of people working to not working after 10 years
- **Social Work Emphasis**
 - Percentage of graduating class that are social work majors
- **School Performance**
 - Admissions rate (more selective the better)
 - Graduation rate
 - Average cost of attendance (lower is better)
 - Median amount of debt after graduation

Once the data was gathered, Zippia ranked all schools in Michigan offering a social work program for each of the criteria above with “1” being the best in any given criteria. Next, they averaged the ranks for each school to create a social work quality index, which yielded the top 10 social work programs in Michigan for 2018.

In a different national ranking report by College Human ServicesEDU.org, Kuyper's social work program was ranked as the most affordable of all private colleges in Michigan.



Join us for a day of golf, food and fun on August 26 at Stonewater Country Club. As in the past, there will be many prizes awarded, including longest drive, closest to the pin, lowest team score, and more. Non-golfers are welcome to join us for dinner.

We are planning the best event ever, with a goal of raising over \$100,000 in scholarship support for international students preparing for ministry in their country. Presently, students from Kenya, Ecuador, South Korea, Guatemala and Malawi are attending Kuyper as Ambassador Scholarship recipients.

For information on golfing, sponsorship opportunities, dinner, or other ways of supporting international students, visit www.kuyper.edu/golf or call Lisa Rusticus at 1.877.229.0940.

Professional Development

Andy Smith (2015) graduated on April 13 with a Master of Divinity degree from Providence Theological Seminary.

Joe Puplis (2005) began a new position at Kuyper College as Senior Admissions Counselor.

As alumni, we invite you to get involved and stay in touch

by calling the Alumni Office at 877.229.0941 or sending us

an email to alumni@kuyper.edu with your contact information

or the most recent news about you.

While my sons were growing up, I worked as a paramedic in Wayland, MI, for 20 years. After they graduated from high school, I began to feel a tug to study the Bible. I looked at several schools and decided on Kuyper College. What made the final decision for me was the staff's commitment to guide each student to live out their calling. I was not sure what my calling was at the time, but Kuyper was instrumental in helping me think through the process.

At Kuyper I found a brilliant, unique and diverse group of students who were open to wherever God was leading them. I also love the Reformed foundation and found I was able to live that out at Kuyper.

After graduating from Kuyper, I went to Calvin Seminary and graduated in 2012 with a Master of Arts in Pastoral Care. From there I moved to Fort Wayne, Indiana, where I was immersed in the clinical pastoral education program for two years at Lutheran Hospital. My second year at Lutheran I specialized in palliative care, where I met people going through the worst times in their lives. Pain and suffering make people reevaluate their lives and how death fits into living. It draws some closer to God and drives others farther away.

At the end of the program, I acquired a position as chaplain with Baruch Senior Ministries in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I am chaplain to senior assisted living and dementia folks in five different homes throughout West Michigan. Each home has anywhere from forty to eighty residents. I also am chaplain to the staff of these homes.

I begin my day checking in with the life enrichment director to see how the residents are doing holistically. I address the more urgent needs first and then spend my day leading a Bible study and visiting with residents, which involves small talk, family concerns, personal concerns and time spent in Scripture and prayer.

What I love about my job is being with people and sharing Jesus with them. Not everyone is a Christian. It can be challenging to develop a trusting relationship with them so I can talk about the Lord. As we talk through their uncertainties about faith, I find my mine challenged as well. The discussions make me think deeply about what I believe and why I believe it.



Hofman baptizing a fellow soldier



Wykstra serving communion

The most challenging thing about my job is seeing people physically decline. Life is a circle, and dying is a part of living. Living has its hardships, but dying, ah, that leads to living in the very presence of Jesus!

You may ask, "Why did you choose this position?" My answer is that I didn't. I never wanted to be a chaplain or work with senior assisted living and dementia folks. Sound surprising? Maybe. However, I have learned that what I want and what God has called me to are not always the same thing. I love what I am doing for Jesus.



Peter Hofman
Chaplain (Maj.) U.S. Army

Peter Hofman CLASS 2002
Chaplain (Maj.) U.S. Army

I was born and raised on a dairy farm just outside of the small town of Waupun, Wisconsin. I was the ninth child of 11 children. My father died when I was just 8 years old. This made me come face-to-face with what I believed about life and death, and God became more than just a distant heavenly Father to me. He became one I could cry out, "Abba, Daddy," to, and I knew that He heard me and cared for me.

After graduating high school, it took time and the advice of a few good friends for me to accept my call to ministry. But when I did, in the fall of 1998, I entered Kuyper College. The campus environment was a piece of heaven, meaning that it was what you would imagine a community of Christians to be like—people who prayed for each other, read God's Word, worshipped together, and served together. I really enjoyed Professor Doug Felch. He genuinely cared for students, and he had a visible passion for teaching God's Word. I will forever be thankful for the identity I received in the Reformed faith.

The summer before entering Kuyper I had enlisted in the Army Reserves. During basic training I had become aware of the deep spiritual need of my fellow soldiers. God made it clear that my love for the Army and for soldiers could go hand in hand with my call to ministry through chaplaincy. While at Kuyper, I met Mel Flikkema, vice president for

academic affairs, who was also an Army Chaplain. He encouraged me to follow God's leading into Army chaplaincy.

After graduating from Kuyper and Calvin Seminary, I joined the Army as a chaplain. Beyond my chaplaincy, I wanted to do something challenging and exciting. After a tour in Iraq, I applied and was selected to attend Ranger school, which confirmed that this was what I came into the Army to do. After Ranger school, I was assigned to the 3rd Special Forces Group in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. From there I deployed to Afghanistan twice with the same battalion for nine months each time.

I loved my stateside ministry, where I spent time counseling soldiers and leading marriage retreats and Bible studies. However, on deployment, I get to preach every Sunday to my guys and travel, usually by helicopter, to different outposts on the front lines. I spend a few days there, hold a worship service, and go out on missions alongside the troops.

Near the end of my time assignment at Fort Bragg, the Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) started allowing chaplains to attend the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). This had only been opened decades ago for a few chaplains. It was purely an act of God that I was accepted. One day, after my final patrol in the Small Unit Tactics portion of the course, I was sitting with the rest of the platoon waiting for a final review, when an instructor walked up to me and said, "What's your deal, man? Why are you as a chaplain, learning about assaulting objectives and carrying weapons?" I could tell he was irritated by my presence, and after a little back and forth I finally said, "Well, sergeant, I think the Special Forces motto, 'De Oppresso Liber' (To Free the Oppressed) is an important mission. In fact, it is the same mission that Jesus stated was his mission in Luke 4 quoting from Isaiah, chapter 61. It's a mission that I would like to be a part of, and the Special Forces community is a brotherhood that I would be honored to serve in." Apparently, that satisfied him because he walked away. In that moment I became more aware than ever before what a huge responsibility I was being charged with and what a privilege it was to be there and serve with these "guardians."

If the Lord allows, I would love to complete at least 20 years in the military, and if He grants more, I would love it. After I hang up my uniform, I look forward to serving a church as a pastor.



Rick Keikintveld

Spiritual Care Director/Chaplain
Baruch Senior Ministries

Rick Keikintveld CLASS 1973
Spiritual Care Director/Chaplain Baruch
Senior Ministries

I grew up in Holland, MI, with wonderful Christian parents. Through a number of surgeries when I was young and my mother's battle with cancer, two of my pastors had a huge impact on my life and call to ministry. It was through my personal struggle of accepting my mother's death that I came to know the Lord in a personal way.

The fall after graduating from high school in 1969, I enrolled and spent a year at a



Keikintveld conducting worship services

different college, then the Lord led me to Kuyper in the fall of 1970. It was, as they say, "love at first sight." The staff and students loved the Lord and had a passion to learn and serve. I not only received a great education, but the encouragement and inspiration to follow the call the Lord had for me. I'm still grateful for the professors who poured out their love and learning into my life.

After graduating in 1973 with a Bachelor of Religious Education degree, I moved from West Michigan to West New York, N.J., to serve as a lay minister for youth and outreach at Trinity Reformed Church. My training at Kuyper helped me direct the church's educational program; lead the youth program, which grew from six young people to approximately 75; and also to reach out to the community.

From there, I served in CRC churches in Michigan and Indiana. My role of calling on seniors as the pastor of congregational life at Ada CRC laid the foundation for the Lord calling me to chaplaincy.

When I started with Baruch Senior ministries, I was the only chaplain for eight homes in Michigan. I called on residents one on one, and if needed, led Bible studies or worship. I also recruited and trained community pastors in various locations.

Through the years Baruch grew from eight to 26 assisted living homes in Michigan. That growth brought increased responsibilities, and I became spiritual care director/chaplain. While I still had homes of my own to visit, I also became team leader for three other chaplains who each had their own homes.

Of all my years in ministry, these were the most rewarding. I loved engaging with the seniors because each one was special and each of their stories was so wonderfully unique. The senior saints with their life-tested faith inspired and taught me so much. Those whose faith was not so strong I had the opportunity to encourage. For those who lacked any type of faith, I had the wonderful opportunity of sharing the good news of the Lord with them, all with the goal of helping each one finish well here and have the confidence of life everlasting.

I have recently retired from paid ministry but continue to be involved in ministry in many volunteer ways. My desire is to continue to serve the Lord I love until He calls me home. I would encourage those called to ministry to not overlook chaplaincy. It can be very demanding to give so much in caring for the needs of those you serve. That said, chaplaincy is a rich and rewarding field of ministry.

Master of Ministry & Mission Statements

Recently, I had the privilege to gather with 10 students at Kuyper College as part of the *Mission of the Church* course in Kuyper's Master of Ministry program. Having taught undergrad classes at Kuyper for 11 years, I was both excited and nervous.

While our master's program is new—a new level of academic work and new demographic of students—in many ways, it's as old as the mission of Kuyper: seeing a need to better equip leaders in the body of Christ and stepping up to meet it. So, how is this program similar or different to both undergrad courses and master's level courses at other institutions? As I prepared this course, I did so with the distinctives of the M.Min. program in mind.

First, this program focuses on two learning communities: Kuyper and the students' ministry context. Rather than seeing learning as a solely "academic" endeavor, we want students to integrate what they are learning in class within their ministry context. A second distinctive of this program is integration. Often, students see assignments as "jumping through hoops," simply crossing off the next thing on the way to a degree. But in this program, they see the intrinsic value of what they are studying, the direct application of what they are learning, and why it matters to their ministry.

So, what does this mean for the *Mission of the Church* course? Our central assignment is to write a mission statement for each student's specific ministry. Now, to be sure, we spend a lot of time asking the biblical and theological questions surrounding the mission of the church. But once those heady questions have been answered, a further question still remains: what does that look like, on the ground, in specific ministry contexts?

This is where a mission statement comes in. A mission statement is a short, broad statement that answers the question, "What are we doing?" in a specific ministry context. So why is having a mission statement so valuable? A clear mission statement determines the ministry's direction and, in doing so, provides a template for decision making. Finally, a mission statement helps us evaluate our ministries, asking: Are we doing what we actually say we are doing?

I love that Kuyper is taking the lead on making theological education even more praxis-focused, equipping students to serve the body of Christ.

The author, Branson Parler, is a Kuyper Associate Professor of Theological Studies.

In My Words

ACCOUNTING 101

Psalm 27:8 (NLT) is my favorite Scripture: "My heart has heard you say, 'Come and talk with me.' And my heart responds, 'Lord, I am coming.'" It's miraculous to me that my God really likes my company. That's so dumbfounding—a



Christine Mulka

Controller-Chief
Financial Officer

living God, who desires to be involved in the minutia of my life, a God who builds a series of real-life experiences upon tested skills to prepare us for each successive challenge. And what's the most astounding of all is that it was foreordained from the foundation of the world. Now that's love. (How could I have comprehended the role *Accounting 101* would eventually play when I signed up for it my freshman year?)

In 2017, while consulting with a not-for-profit organization in Grand Rapids, I got a call from a mentor about a job. I had prayed about my next consulting engagement and wanted to be used for His glory. I met with four people when I interviewed. What I saw, not necessarily with my eyes and ears, but more as a revelation by the Holy Spirit, was a group of leaders with a deep-seated passion for God, and secondly, for the mission of Kuyper College. They were so on fire. Each asked and answered questions, and with each succeeding meeting, I realized that God had quickened my spirit with a desire to be a part of the Kuyper College community. I knew that the Lord had a role I'd be able to fill. My heart heard Him tell me.

Just over a year later, I love coming to work. I receive such joy from the knowledge that each student is vital to Kuyper College. It's true—we love each one. We get to know them in chapel or the lunch line or in the hallways or when paying a bill. I get to be there to see God's work in each life and Jesus Christ becoming fully formed in them as they apply what they learn in class or in their work to their "real life." I also get to see them dealing with life's challenges, from small to large, and how their lives, reflecting the Holy Spirit, warm their gentle smiles when they stand with a hurting friend. I know the foundations in scriptural truth, spiritual formation, academic excellence, and of a godly community are the tools they'll carry with them to overcome challenges wherever they go and whatever they do. When God calls them, they're prepared to say, "Lord, I am coming." It encourages me, knowing that my work, though usually done in a back office, contributes to the journey of even one of these amazing young people.

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

Kuyper Alumna Becomes Editor of New Teen Devotional

Kuyper alumna Kandi Zeller was named editor of Keys for Kids Ministries' new devotional for teenagers called "Unlocked." Zeller, 23, graduated from Kuyper in 2017 with a degree in English professional studies and a certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Zeller grew up in Muskegon, Michigan, where the children's devotional "Keys for Kids" fueled her faith and deepened her understanding of the Gospel. Her love of words and storytelling was evident from a young age; her family has a video of her telling the Christmas story when she was only 4 years old. Naturally, she was drawn to a degree in English. Because she grew up in a small family and attended a small church, a community-centered college like Kuyper appealed to her.

When Zeller visited Kuyper for the first time, she and her parents felt a strong sense of peace. She was impressed by how much the faculty truly cared and felt that she would fit right in. Kuyper's English professional studies program was the perfect marriage of her love of words and her yet undiscovered love of theology. Zeller said that her time at Kuyper equipped her to go out and do ministry, and it did so in some ways that she did not expect. It challenged her deeply and helped her to think through different aspects of her faith. In the end, "Kuyper gave me a more fully orbed picture of the Gospel and an every-square-inch mentality," she said.

Zeller started working at Keys for Kids Ministries through an English internship. She chose Keys because it was very formative in her childhood and because her then-boyfriend, now husband, Kevin Zeller (2018) came to Christ through a "Keys for Kids" devotional. She wanted to give back to the place that had given her and Kevin so much. She began her time at Keys as an editorial intern, then was hired as an editorial assistant upon the completion of her internship. Two years later, when Keys made the decision to launch "Unlocked," they offered her the position of editor.

Keys for Kids Ministries began in the 1940s as Children's Bible Hour, featuring several children's radio dramas and Bible teaching programs. Their radio ministry is still going strong, and executive director Greg Yoder hosts a program for parents called "Parent Minute." Designed to be daily devotionals to get kids in the Word, they launched their written devotional "Keys for Kids" in the 80s.

Later, Keys began partnering with local Christian camps to produce "Keys for Camps," which is a copy of "Keys for Kids" with a wraparound cover with the camp's logo. Camps give them to their campers so they can stay connected to the Word all year long. The program was so successful that the camps approached Keys to ask if they had anything for their teenage campers. At the time, Keys did not, so they began to research which resources were available to teens. They could not find anything like "Keys for Kids" for teens, so they launched "Unlocked" to meet the need. Zeller's love of the Gospel and passion for spreading the truth made her a natural



Zeller with a copy of "Unlocked"

choice for the position as editor. Her dream for "Unlocked" is that it becomes a tool to equip teenage readers with the truth of the Gospel, much like Kuyper did for her. According to her, the question that "Unlocked" persistently asks is, "What effect does Jesus and what He did have on the topic we're discussing?" Then, addressing the question of topics, she added, "We will address anything because the Gospel addresses everything."

Zeller is not the only Kuyper alumnus making a difference at "Keys for Kids." Her husband is on their theological review team, and Taylor Eising (2017) is an editorial assistant at "Unlocked."

The best part of her job, according to Zeller, is getting to see people catch the vision of "Unlocked." She gets excited when teenage writers submit Gospel-centered devotionals for consideration, exclaiming, "Go teenagers! You preach!"

Zeller has high hopes for this multi-genre teen devotional, explaining, "I believe in the power of literature to bring about change. What did God use to change us? He wrote a book!"

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Andres Lopez

I grew up in a Christian home where both my parents have always been very involved in Church leadership. At home I always had some knowledge of who Jesus was and what his death and resurrection meant. However, it wasn't until I was about 9 years old, during a summer camp, that I gave my life to Christ. Afterward, things kind of stayed the same. I was the same "good kid" that made the occasional mistake. I think that at the time I mostly wanted just to be as comfortable as possible, and it seemed like accepting Christ was just the logical thing to do to remain comfortable.

Time went by, and I faced different crises that shaped my faith, but nothing was as challenging as facing failure during my young adulthood—a challenge that made me get in sync with the Holy Spirit and listen to God and how He was calling me to serve him and His people.

During my teenage years, I went to a high-end school just outside the city called Campo Real. When my classmates and I turned 16, many of them started showing up in their own cars—actually, really nice cars! This was a bit difficult because I didn't really understand that my parents could barely afford the school and that they were sacrificing just so that I could get a decent education.

I graduated from high school in 2009 and decided to go to dentistry school. This was the only career I could think of where I could be my own boss and make a ton of money. Oh, what a fool I was. During the next four years, I only completed two year's worth of content.

After failing miserably, I spent a lot of time asking God why. Why, if I was one of His children, He could not help me succeed? Why would He condemn me to a life of economic misery? Why? Why? Why? Through godly mentors and friends, God answered and said: "What makes you think that you are called to a life of comfort and selfish ambition?" It was during this time that I began to listen to God and was able to identify His calling for me—working with youth.

When I mentioned this to one of my mentors, he immediately said I should apply to Kuyper College. He said that the youth ministry program and professors were excellent. I did, and he was right!

At Kuyper, I found a supportive community that genuinely cares and is always looking for ways to serve each other in a warm and welcoming environment where everyone feels safe to express themselves. I also found a diversity of thought and good teaching. I wasn't told what to believe, but how to discern and how to understand the Scriptures. I was given tools and resources to serve the Church and help build bridges between the kingdom of heaven and those who have been forgotten and are lost. I have been encouraged to care for those in need and to welcome the stranger and the foreigner into my life.

I also love the professors at Kuyper. They respect and value the students. They've challenged me both academically and in my personal life. Here, at Kuyper, I have been impacted most by the challenge to always value relationships and community because this is what keeps the church active and at work sharing and living the Gospel, effectively reaching and serving others.

Before coming to Kuyper, I had been dating my now wife, Carla. We became engaged in 2014 and married on August 15, 2015—two weeks before classes started. We will be moving to Guatemala after graduation.

We look forward to serving our people in some form of community development work. I really want to be able to create opportunities to build bridges where there are none. God has equipped me with the knowledge and resources I need to bring people together, to unify what has been divided, and to shine a light of hope where there seems to be none.



CLASS **2019**

HOME **Guatemala City, Guatemala**

MAJOR **Ministry Leadership**