

KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Eruption of the Fuego Volcano
in San Miguel de Los Lotes,
Guatemala

Inside this Issue

MY STORY

RACHEL GOULART DE LEÓN

I was born into a Christian family in Anapolis, Brazil, as the youngest of four children. Both my parents felt the call to missions even before I was born. By the time I was 2 years old, our family took off to West Africa on a life calling that shaped all of our lives forever. The following eight years of my life in Senegal were spent watching my parents preach the Truth to an entire village that was so lost in their own beliefs.

I saw firsthand how God transforms lives and renews us all despite what we have done! My parents devoted themselves to sharing the gospel and were able to see the entire village come to Christ after a few years of sharing the gospel with them. What a wonderful day that was! They had a passion for

Alumni Profile

CLASS

2009

HOME

Guatemala City, Guatemala

CAREER

**TAVA Project Director,
AMG International**

FAMILY

**Husband, Gary de León,
and two children, Xavier
and Iker**

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KUYPER.EDU

Our Master and Maker

At Kuyper, we always approach April with great anticipation and enthusiasm. It is a month in which we mark the accomplishments of our students and the gathering of our community through meaningful events, such as Honors Convocation, Student Scholar Day, Commencement, and the Spring Gala.

Earlier this year, we chose Psalm 90:17 as the theme for the 2020 Spring Gala: “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us— yes, establish the work of our hands.” Little did we realize then, that we would have to cancel the Gala along with all the other April events due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While we’re unable to celebrate this theme together this year, the message of Psalm 90:17 continues to be our prayer as we adjust our lives and do the work God has set before us in these new circumstances. Yes, Lord, show us your favor and establish the work of our hands, even now as we teach online and work remotely.

As I reflect on these past weeks, I give thanks to God for providing us with wisdom, strength, protection, and goodwill shared with each other. Also, I am grateful to our students, faculty, and staff for the ways in which they have faced these challenges and changes with creativity and collaboration in their work, care for one other, and certainty that we can do this together.

Our Philosophy of Education aims for learning that is rooted in love, holistic, and happens in community. Even though our learning environment has changed, our faculty and staff are 100% committed to these goals. The faculty care about their teaching and the learning and well-being of our students, and the staff have created many ways in which to nurture community and foster faith formation opportunities virtually. God is establishing our work, even in these unsettled times, and for that we give Him thanks.

I requested a special musical number, “Before You I Kneel (A Worker’s Prayer)” by Keith and Kristyn Getty, to be sung at our Spring Gala; it was also sung at my



Presidential Inauguration. We won’t be hearing this song this year; so, in closing, I’ll share the words of the last stanza:

*Before You we kneel, our Master and Maker;
Establish the work of our hands,
And order our steps to seek first Your kingdom
In every small and great task.
May we live the gospel of Your grace,
Serve Your purpose in our fleeting days,
Then our lives will bring eternal praise
And all glory to Your great name.*

May God grant you favor and establish your work, even in the midst. . .

Grace and peace,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Patti".

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

“The message of Psalm 90:17 continues to be our prayer as we adjust our lives and do the work God has set before us in these new circumstances.”

Kuyper Community Notes

Births

Sam and **Liz (Cain) Campbell** (2011) welcomed home baby girl Chloe Grace on February 15, 2019.

Professional Development

Kevin Zeller (2018) accepted a position as a full-time staff writer for Mission Network News.

Rachel Rao (2016) is now the care manager at Project Home Indy in Indianapolis, IN.

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.

Kuyper's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Like most of the world, Kuyper College has been affected by the health concerns around the spreading of Coronavirus/COVID-19. The response from the College has been prudent, swift and

Do You Have Questions?

- FOR PERIODIC UPDATES VISIT:
<https://www.kuyper.edu/covid-19-updates/>
- DIRECT QUESTIONS VIA EMAIL TO
advancement@kuyper.edu.
PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR NAME IN THE
BODY OF THE EMAIL.

comprehensive. With mounting cases of the virus in Michigan, Kuyper is monitoring the outbreak with the assistance and guidance of local, state and federal health officials.

In order to support and respond to Executive Orders of Michigan's

Governor, on March 19, Kuyper suspended face-to-face classes and is now offering courses in a fully online format for the remainder of the semester. Faculty and staff, except for essential employees (as defined by Executive Order) are working remotely and are providing proactive and responsive support for student success and ongoing College operations.

Student Development has created several ways to nurture community virtually via digital tools. With daily "Morning Shows," virtual "Hang-outs" in the evenings and virtual faith formation opportunities three times a week, students have opportunities to stay connected to their classmates and the campus community.

In addition, effective March 13, Kuyper cancelled all College on-campus or sponsored activities until further notice—including Convocation and all Commencement activities. Faculty and Staff are working to determine how to creatively acknowledge graduates via the use of digital tools. The Spring Gala (April 20) has also been cancelled, as all on-campus events organized by outside groups. This suspension of activities will also remain in effect until further notice.

Kuyper has responded well over the past few weeks. As the pandemic continues to evolve, the College is well positioned to support students as they complete this academic year, while ensuring ongoing College operations this semester, and preparation for future semesters.

KUYPER FREEZES TUITION

Keeping Christian College Education Affordable

Kuyper College will freeze tuition for new students entering the College in the fall 2020 semester. Published tuition rates for new full-time students entering the College will remain the same for four years for freshmen and up to four years for transfer students, depending on their class standing at transfer. Current students will also benefit from this freeze through a combination of the freeze and increased institutional aid.

"We are committed to helping our students and their families make a Kuyper College education as affordable as possible," said Dr. Patricia Harris, Kuyper's president. "This is the latest of several initiatives over the past few years that we have taken to increase affordability and access for our students."

A Comprehensive Plan for College Affordability

Kuyper has developed a comprehensive plan to aid students and families with the costs of college. There are four key components to this plan: Competitive published tuition rates. Substantial financial aid awards. On-campus employment that serves both the educational and financial needs of students. Support to lower and repay college-related debt.

- **Competitive Tuition Rates:** Kuyper's published tuition rate of \$23,970 is significantly lower than comparable Christian colleges—an average of \$5,000 less per year.
- **Substantial Financial Aid:** 100% of Kuyper students receive

financial aid—an average of \$17,897 per year—through grants, scholarships, state and federal assistance programs. And Kuyper is intentional about keeping student debt at graduation as low as possible. In fact, a recent study by LendEDU ranks Kuyper the lowest in student debt at graduation among all Michigan colleges and universities. In a similar study, also conducted by LendEDU, Kuyper was ranked one of the best colleges in the nation for financial aid.

- **KuyperWorks:** A four-year Kuyper College program that guarantees on-campus jobs for resident students and provides them with workplace and career readiness skills for post-graduation employment. Students in the program are paid \$15 per hour—from which they receive a stipend with the balance applied to reduce tuition.
- **Financial Safety Net:** The Kuyper Loan Repayment Assistance Program provides a safety net for students by helping to repay loans after graduation if a graduate's income does not meet a specified threshold—presently \$38,000. Kuyper is one of only two colleges in Michigan to make this program available to all incoming freshmen at no cost to students or their families.

"Our strong and comprehensive plan for college affordability," said Dr. Harris, "is one of the reasons College Consensus ranks Kuyper College #1 nationally in Student Satisfaction among all Christian colleges and universities, and Wallet Hub ranks Kuyper at #6, among the Top 10 Best Colleges in Michigan."

others, including teaching new skills to help these villagers have an income to combat the devastating poverty and malnutrition in that region of Senegal. That was how my parents served, and how they used their skills impacted the way I saw missions and shaped my worldview, my calling and my future!

At age 5 I accepted Christ, and by my early teens I knew I wanted to serve Him in ministry using my future profession. It was just a matter of finding the right Christian college that would accept an international student who wanted to study social work. And to add on to that pressure, I knew my parents were unable to help me financially. The only option I had was to find a scholarship that would cover all my expenses—something that seemed impossible, or at least that's what I thought.

After finishing high school, I started applying to colleges in the United States without ever having visited the country, but it was my only option. I remember looking at the map of the USA and seeing these beautiful lakes around a state called Michigan. The first thought in my mind was, "Must be pretty there; let's try finding a college." And sure enough, after some web research, the first option that showed up was Kuyper College. It was a match made in heaven! They offered everything that I was looking for: a theology degree, as well as a social work major, and a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certificate. I applied! And to my surprise they offered me a full-ride scholarship for four years! The following year I left for Kuyper. I was on my own in a foreign place that would eventually become like a second home to me!

Kuyper gave me the education I needed, prepared me for missions, shaped the way I saw life and those around me, gave me lifelong friendships and even brought me to my husband, Gary. After graduating from Kuyper and graduate school, my husband and I felt the call to go to his home country of Guatemala and serve there as missionaries. I spent some time learning the language and falling in love with the people and culture of Guatemala. And during this process all that I could think of was what I had learned from my parents while growing up. I knew God wanted to use me to bring His Word to this nation, especially with youth that feel lost along their journey and need a mentor not only to help carry them through the hardships of life, but also to teach them skills that empower them to reach their dreams.



Rachel, Gary and street youth



Gary, Rachel, Xavier, and Iker

With my heart ready to serve, God led Gary and I to the streets of Guatemala, where drug addicted homeless street youth lived. We were coming right out of college with no previous experience with this population group, but that didn't stop us! We jumped into our first ministry as newlyweds and were excited for this new chapter in our lives. We really had no idea how hard it was serving in missions, and perhaps that naivete helped us continue pushing through even the toughest of days. God was using us during that time in our lives to teach us so many valuable lessons and help us discover our passion for working with youth! We see it clearly today, but at the time the obstacles we were facing seemed impossible to overcome. I believe we gave it our all! We fell in love with the youth and walked alongside them through each high and low as addiction kept controlling their lives. We "loved on them" when no one else wanted to be a part of their lives and society had rejected them. Gary even slept on the streets with them to understand more of what homeless life was like! I remember the numerous times sitting in emergency rooms holding the hands of young pregnant teens who had no prenatal care and used drugs throughout their pregnancies. Through each of these experiences we learned to love more and to love deeply! At the same time, we also hurt deeply when many would give up on rehab and return to life in the streets, and others who were involved in street violence were killed. Many even believed in God's truth, but sin had control over their addiction. We felt powerless in those moments and discouraged that there was no way out of this lifestyle. Our goal was to get them off the streets and off of drugs, and all we kept seeing was more youth joining the street life and addiction. At times we felt helpless. But we didn't give up on them! We kept walking alongside them but also looking for other solutions.

That's when we decided to focus on prevention. The one thing all these youth had in common besides their addiction was the abuse they all had suffered as children that led them to escape to the streets. Knowing this, we learned that if we helped these kids while they were still at home, we could prevent them from fleeing to the streets, and their stories would be different. That's when we

decided to join AMG International, the current ministry we serve in, that is focused on childhood prevention and attention. We continued serving with the street youth but focused our efforts on helping children who are still at home to stay with their families. The program we helped develop turned into a service for orphans and widows, helping single moms and their kids remain together while receiving the support they need to do so. We named it Family Preservation, and we spent the next four years of ministry serving in slum communities where hundreds of these families entered our lives. The model we set up was identifying key churches in the community, training their leaders to be social workers, and giving them the task of providing services for the orphans and widows in their community. During that time, we saw how God was using us to unify families, keep children out of orphanages and off of the streets, and restore those broken homes.

Those years brought us hope that there was a way out of the lifestyle we saw for many years. But God was still stirring in our hearts that we needed to do something more for youth in Guatemala. We would hear so many stories of youth losing hope in reaching their

An Open Invitation

IF YOU WANT TO COME TO GUATEMALA TO VISIT, BE AN INTERN OR VOLUNTEER AT TAVA, PLEASE CONTACT RACHEL AND GARY AT garyracheldeleon@gmail.com

dreams after finishing high school because they didn't have the skills for what the job market was requiring, and many were rejected from jobs because their home address was in the slums. That was a big risk for companies to hire someone from the slums that could be involved in violence or gangs. The youth felt rejected and hopeless! Something had to be done to help guide them. So, Gary put together a plan to give youth a place that they could escape the reality of the slums, discover their passions, and earn an education. We pushed for this youth program for years, but every door kept closing on us. It was a heartbreaking and frustrating period of our lives, but we kept believing that God had different timing than ours. And soon enough that door opened!



San Miguel de Los Lotes after the eruption

In 2018 an active volcano in Guatemala erupted, sending ashes down the valley and devastating communities in the surrounding area. Hundreds of people died in this tragedy, thousands were left without a home and even their own land that they farmed. Everyone both nationally and internationally pitched in to help. Our family took donations several times to the refugee centers. But we knew we had to do more than just donate. We asked God to direct us, and after many sleepless nights, we knew God was sending us to serve with displaced families. And when we were asked to serve them, we immediately looked into the possibility of implementing a program for youth that would accomplish the goals of the plan Gary had developed.

We met with the local community leaders and government officials, and all immediately agreed that helping the youth is exactly what they were in need of! God had already planned it all for us! We restructured our original youth program and named it TAVA Project, which in Hebrew means Noah's ark. The flood was the first natural disaster told in the Bible, and Noah's family was displaced having to leave their hometown. God used the ark as a vehicle to protect them and take them to a new beginning. In the same way with TAVA, we seek to bring hope and a new beginning to families that have been displaced by natural disasters. A new community has been built for these families in a different area from where they lived. Currently, there are 1,000 homes in this new community called Dignity, where TAVA is also located. The project is set up to provide service for children, youth and their families in four areas: social, academic, employment and recreation, with biblical and evangelistic emphasis in each area. Our prayer is to see this new community reached for Christ and for lives to be transformed! We understand that for the gospel to be tangible for these families, we have to also meet their physical, mental and social needs to better provide them with holistic care. Looking back now through all the experiences I've had in life so far, all I can see is God present in each hardship and victory leading me to serve Him from Brazil to Africa to Michigan, and now in Guatemala! May His name be glorified to the ends of the earth!



Tava sponsored children



Join us for a day of golf, food and fun on August 24 at Sunnybrook 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.



In My Words

THE CONCEPT

In 1994 after I left Target Stores, I made the decision I would never put the pursuit of money ahead of working toward something greater than myself. During my college years at a Christian liberal arts college, we were always told



Kevin Gilliam

Admissions Director

about “*The Concept*.” I never really understood the true meaning of it until that point in my life. Part of *The Concept* reads: “Total commitment to Jesus Christ as the perspective for learning, and critical participation in the contemporary world.” I wanted my life to be rooted in a biblical worldview, devoted to Jesus Christ, and to let what I do and the places that I worked in have meaning, purpose and a mission—work that is greater than oneself.

Fast forward to 1999...after spending five years working for a nonprofit, I found my calling in higher education. I was given the opportunity to lead an admissions team at a small Christian college in Grand Rapids. What I found is there is no greater joy then guiding a young person in the pursuit of their education and the calling they have been given by God. I want to see young people have the same experience I had, learning and growing in their faith, and at the same time preparing for the calling God has placed in their heart.

Now, after 20 years in higher education and my time at Kuyper, I still find joy in helping young people pursue their education at a Christ-centered institution. The marketing methods have changed over the years, but the message has not. God is calling each young person who walks onto the Kuyper College campus to pursue Him through their learning. To develop a biblical worldview. To train them so they can bring God’s grace into today’s culture. To see work as a mission.

I get excited as I see Kuyper’s business leadership program doing things like the Triple Bottom Line, where students are not only learning the three P’s of business—product, promotion and profit—but transforming those three P’s by being taught it’s about people, planet and profit. It shows them how businesses need to use profits to invest in the community, to make a difference in the world, and have a mission that serves a greater purpose.

Mission over money: the calling given to me over 25 years ago. May I continue to live *The Concept* every day until He calls me home.

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

Kuyper Students Fund Small Businesses

Marc Andreas, director of the Kuyper business leadership program, uses his two decades of corporate experience in both nonprofit and for-profit organizations to teach and influence his students in unique ways. For Andreas, the Entrepreneurship class is no exception.

There, students study the basics of starting a business, including the development and creation of business models, learning about risk management, financing and gaining startup capital—all of which are typical subjects for the undergraduate Entrepreneurship class. What makes this class unique is the real-time, real-world impact that students have by lending money to small business startups



After receiving a microloan, Dominga sells tamales in El Salvador

around the globe through a process called microfinancing, which is providing small business loans to people in poor communities.

Microfinancing is based on core principles that align closely with what

is taught within the business leadership program curriculum. Andreas ties microfinancing to biblical principles, making the connection that “if we really believe all people are made in God’s image, then all people are deserving of dignity, to have access to grow their standard of living, and to pursue their dreams in their local business community.”

Over the course of the last five years, the Entrepreneurship classes have collectively made 56 microfinance loans in 28 different countries, including startup businesses in agriculture, food and retail—the majority of which are run and operated by women—through an organization called Kiva, using real money gifted to the class from an anonymous donor.

Andreas began using Kiva, a worldwide online lending platform for entrepreneurs, early in his Kuyper career, with the key purpose of helping students move beyond the traditional idea of business loans and financing to promoting a more practical, sustainable and philanthropic approach to business financing.

Ricardo Alfaro, a junior from El Salvador, recalls his experience of lending money to a woman from his home country. “I personally identified with the person that I lent money to—she wanted to start her own store selling tamales.”

The Entrepreneurship class students will continue to use Kiva to learn about microfinancing and help future business startups.



Eric VanderWall (2010) youth pastor at Cascade Fellowship Church, practicing “Pacing Presence”

“Pacing Presence” in Youth Ministry

After completing his doctoral dissertation at Western Theological Seminary, Dr. Brian Telzerow, Kuyper professor of youth ministry and ministry leadership program director, was invited to make a presentation at the 2019 Faculty and Alumni Scholar Day.

His presentation, “*Pacing Presence: Impact of Relational Ministry Course for Graduates of Kuyper College Working with Adolescents*,” provided a birds-eye view of his doctoral research project.

According to Dr. Telzerow, shaping the spiritual life of adolescents comes through when ministry leaders and youth pace together. Keeping pace with one another’s presence, guiding students along as we walk with each other, not being too far ahead of those we are trying to affect. To struggle alongside them is what allows for leadership and real impact. That’s where the term, ‘pacing presence,’ comes from.”

Through a survey, Dr. Telzerow chose to use the real-life experiences of 78 of his former students who currently serve in youth ministry to inform his doctoral research. He was most interested with the results from one question in particular: “How many hours a week do you spend in direct connection with adolescents in their own context and environment?”

Dr. Telzerow then met one-on-one with some of the youth leaders surveyed. From both the survey and those interviews, he identified five key elements that are crucial for youth ministers to succeed in spending quality time with their adolescent students:

- **Time:** Consciously set aside time, an average of 15 hours a week, with their students
- **Support:** Receive support from their senior pastor for spending that much time with their students outside of church
- **Longevity:** The longer they can maintain their pace with each student, the deeper the relationships become
- **Presence:** The more consistent the presence, the easier it is for growth to develop
- **Team:** Recognize that the job cannot be done alone—there needs to be a variety of volunteer youth leaders to accomplish the work

As Dr. Telzerow continues to teach Kuyper’s students during the 2020 spring semester, he is using his dissertation as one of three texts in the Relational Ministry class curriculum.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Isabel Zittle

My family and I are very close. Though we have seen our fair share of ups and downs between my eight siblings, my parents and I, and the loss of my oldest brother—the most rewarding relationships I have ever had have been with my family. From a young age—I was a middle child—they have challenged me in music, art, thinking, poetry, exercise, dance and countless other areas. Life was hard, wonderful, and definitely a roller coaster that was more fun to ride together than alone.

Though my parents loved the Lord, our home has been somewhat spiritually divided, as each one of us carry different views and opinions on the world and Christianity. While this was difficult to navigate at first, it sharpened and refined me to be equipped with the truth of God's Word by spending time reading it daily. I learned how to defend my faith from a young age; to really consider, question and think through what I believed; and to engage in conversations with others about deep topics.

I accepted Christ when I was around 6 years old, but it wasn't until I was 11 that I began reading my Bible on my own and really wrestling with the text. I had what felt like a tremendous amount of wounds I was bringing to God; however, over the course of my middle school and high school years, God brought deep healing through reading His Word, spending time with Him, and being rooted in a Christian community. It is amazing to look back and see the healing and restoration God brings through His Word, prayer, worship and His church, and from those who exemplified a life pursuing Christ.

I was homeschooled most of my life, but for a short time I went to Rockford Public Schools. While public school was a good experience, it was really in homeschooling that a lot of my character and curiosity for learning developed. I also played music, read, wrote voraciously, and constantly met up with friends to have deep conversations.

Fast forward to college. One of the main reasons I came to Kuyper is because they offer a special program for transfer students called 2+2. As a former Grand Rapids Community College, Bridge Street House of Prayer and Youth with a Mission (YWAM) graduate, I found that Kuyper

was willing to take more credits than other colleges and work with me to create the fastest track toward obtaining a bachelor's degree, which I will have within three semesters.

One of the aspects I love most about Kuyper and saw clearly the first day I was here is the faculty's genuine love for God. What they teach is not merely information to retain, but knowledge that is meant to transform students' way of living and make us more like Christ. Professors take time to engage with students and learn their names and who they are. They are gracious with students and their individual learning abilities, generous with their time and words, and partake in life together—they are also very well-equipped to teach their fields of study. Kuyper is an intimate, special community where I've also enjoyed excellent conversations, fits of laughter, and even celebrated birthdays with the community.

My continual desire is to learn more about God's Word, culture, church, biblical historical background, languages, and how we function as individuals and a society. I can honestly say I've experienced growth in all these areas at Kuyper. What's more is that Kuyper is equipping me with a biblical overview of the Old and New Testament, tools for holistic interpretation, Greek, and many other worthwhile skills.

I plan to go back to the YWAM school for my internship portion called School of Biblical Studies (SBS), where I will spend nine months intensively studying God's Word for approximately 60 hours per week. I will be working alongside other students as we investigate the text, historical context, scholarly voices, and formulate our own interpretations, so that we will finish the course by each completing a commentary on the entire Bible. After SBS, my hope is to be able to teach the Bible overseas, engaging with other cultures in order to equip them with the Word of God and taking part in the discipling of all nations.



CLASS **2020**
HOME **Grand Rapids, MI**
MAJOR **Interdisciplinary Studies**