

KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

The Higbys, training language technology consultants at Bible Translation and Literacy, a member of the Wycliffe Global Alliance, in Kenya, East Africa

OUR STORY

DOUG *and* PRISCILLA HIGBY

Language has always been a key part of God's work in creation. The Book of Genesis opens with a sweeping account of order cultivated out of chaos and nothingness, all through words spoken by God. Today, He continues to speak to every nation and every tribe through the words of the Bible translated into every language. Two individuals who've spent their lives in Bible translation after graduating from Kuyper are Doug and Priscilla (Steensma) Higby. This is their story.

Alumni Profile

CLASS
1990

HOME
Grand Rapids, Michigan

CAREER
Wycliffe Bible Translators

FAMILY
Doug, Priscilla and three adult sons

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Walking By Faith

Perhaps during the recent Advent and Christmas seasons, you heard or read the Annunciation passage in Luke 1: 26-38. Luke tells the story of the angel Gabriel's visit with Mary and his announcement that she would give birth to the Son of the Most High and name him Jesus.

I can only imagine that this was both a triumphant and troubling message for Mary. The prophets had foretold the promise of the Messiah, the Jews had waited centuries for His coming, and now the angel of the Lord says that this will be. God's Word has come to pass—that is something to celebrate! Yet, the recipient and the scene of this announcement are so disquieting and unlikely. Mary, a teenage virgin, engaged to Joseph, from the small, out-of-the-way town of Nazareth—how will this be?

Gabriel is ready with an answer: "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you . . . For no word from God will ever fail" (vv. 35-37).

Even while Mary is troubled by Gabriel's message and questions the outcome, she finds comfort and confidence in his answer. Perhaps it reminds her of Isaiah's proclamation in

chapter 61:1, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me." Or, maybe she finds herself reciting Psalm 91, "Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty." Remarkably, and in contrast to Zechariah's response (Luke 1: 18), Mary responds in humility and faith: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled" (v. 38).

We may never have an encounter such as Mary's, but how many times in our lives, when we face new opportunities or unexpected challenges, have we asked that same question—how will this be? And, as we contemplate the answer, will we respond in faith, knowing that the Holy Spirit will empower and direct us as we find comfort and confidence in the shadow of the Highest? Do we believe that no word from God will ever fail?



In this New Year, as we walk by faith, let's take this message forward and not pack it away with our Christmas decorations. As we rest in God's shadow and are empowered by His Spirit, may we answer the question—how can this be?—by bearing witness to God's word. A gospel message that will not return empty but will accomplish God's desire and achieve God's purpose (Is. 55:1). This is the testimony of Doug and Priscilla Higby, as highlighted in our cover story. Thanks be to God!

Grateful to serve,

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

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

"In this New Year, as we walk by faith, let's take this message forward and not pack it away with our Christmas decorations. As we rest in God's shadow and are empowered by His Spirit, may we answer the question—how can this be?—by bearing witness to God's word."

Kuyper Community Notes

Marriages

Rueben Antvelink (2014) and Mary Ansley Chitwood were united in marriage on October 16, 2021.

Births

Brady (2011) and Denae **Mulder** adopted Keerti Sue Mulder, born in India on December 16, 2018, on August 8, 2021.

Tom and **Nicole (Bengelink) Doll** (2012), along with big sisters Olivia and Abigail, welcomed to the family Ezra Thomas on September 9, 2021.

Jake and **Catie (Jasperse) Hower** (2010) welcomed home Amelia Elaine on October 27, 2021.

Brad and **Bethany (Burns) Sanford** (2018) welcomed home Elaina Lynn on October 31, 2021.

Helping Business Leaders Flourish



Samantha (Jansma) Sleeman



Seth Morgan

“We know we’re showing up and performing, not to earn anything, but to glorify God with our unique talents and abilities, and our clients see that.”

Sometimes, God directs our lives down paths we could not have predicted for ourselves. Samantha (Jansma) Sleeman (2019) and Seth Morgan (2019) know this well. After graduating from the business leadership program at Kuyper, both forged careers in different places than where they find themselves now. “About this time last year, I was working as a project manager at Steelcase,” said Samantha. “Since graduation, I had been steeped in the marketing world. I started out at a firm in Grand Rapids before moving back home to Massachusetts to work for a credit union,” Seth recalled. Before long, however, they would both have the opportunity to follow God’s direction to a company called Unleashed CEO.

Unleashed CEO is a company committed to helping other business leaders flourish through coaching, consulting and outsourcing. “We partner with CEOs to help them get clear on who they are, where they’re going, and create the right team structure to help them accomplish their goals,” said Samantha. Seth added, “We help business leaders think about their companies holistically and make changes to continue to grow.” The idea is to help company owners solve problems and build healthy, functional team cultures so they can use their businesses to positively impact the world.

Both Seth and Samantha feel that God has led them to their current positions. “I loved my job at Steelcase; I could not imagine myself leaving. But I didn’t want to put God in a box,” Samantha said. When a friend reached out with an opportunity to become the Chief Operating Officer for Unleashed CEO, she felt that taking that job was

the right decision. She added, “The Lord was calling, and I had to step out in obedience and do that.” Later on, she was able to connect her former classmate, Seth, with an opportunity at Unleashed CEO as well. “I was looking for a job that was a bit more focused on helping people. It was just a natural, great fit,” he said.

Their time at Kuyper College prepared Samantha and Seth well for their roles at Unleashed CEO. “One of the most formative classes I had at Kuyper was on communication,” recalled Seth. “I learned about taking in information and listening to understand, not listening to respond.” Samantha added, “I use a quote from that class on an almost weekly basis. Our professor would say that ‘Communication is all about mutual understanding.’ If you don’t have mutual understanding, you have not communicated properly.” This kind of communication with their clients and coworkers allows them to serve more effectively.

One of the best parts of working at Unleashed CEO, according to both Samantha and Seth, is the company’s core values. “Our core values and our vision are not explicitly religious, but they are definitely informed by the Christian faith that our founders and many of the employees here share,” Samantha said. “We sometimes like to call it ‘undercover discipleship.’ We know we’re showing up and performing, not to earn anything, but to glorify God with our unique talents and abilities, and our clients see that.” Seth emphasized, “We show up every day with excellence, keeping in mind who it is we’re serving and why.”

Professional Development

Jason Nagel (2004) is serving as interim lead pastor at Corinth Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

Lexie Oosse (2011) earned a Master of Divinity degree from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary and accepted a position as a hospice chaplain at Promedica Hospice in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Hannah (Boer) Pruim (2017) joined Northstar Recycling as a business development representative.

Leah Jueckstock (2020) joined Spectrum Health Rehab and Nursing Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan, as a social worker.

Eli Vang (2020) joined Lakeshore Technical College in Cleveland, Wisconsin, as a student retention coordinator.

After completing high school in 1986, Doug wanted to immediately dive into translating the Bible. “I felt God’s call to do Bible translation when I was in high school,” he said. “Yet, eager as I was, I was forced to make a detour called college.” His zeal for linguistics and translation would only grow while at Kuyper, and he would come to be grateful for his time here.

One area of study captivated him in particular. “I soaked in Dr. Paul Bremer’s Greek class as the most practical one for my future work,” Doug recalled. He listened with rapt attention and learned all he could, and this made him more than well prepared. “To be honest, even as a Bible translator, I’m not sure my Greek knowledge ever returned to the summit where it was for my final exam at Kuyper,” he said. The impact made on him by Dr. Bremer and other professors at Kuyper has continued to stick with him through the intervening years.

While studying at Kuyper, Doug met another student and asked her for a date. As though by design, they had a future career goal in common. Since he first felt God’s call in high school, Doug had desired to work with Wycliffe Bible Translators. Believing no one should have to learn a new language to understand God’s Word, Wycliffe has translated the entire Bible or New Testament into more than 1,628 languages. “On that date, I asked Priscilla what she was planning on doing after graduation. When she said that she wanted to work with Wycliffe, I about fell off my chair,” he recalled.

Living a Dream

Graduating from Kuyper in 1990, Doug and Priscilla married soon after. They planned to work for a few years in order to save money before heading out into the mission field and beginning the work of translating the Bible. After only a few months, however, God closed that particular door and opened a new one. They received the opportunity to begin their linguistic training in 1992 and left for Europe. “We did our French language learning in Belgium for a year, in preparation to work in West Africa,” Doug said. Since French is widely spoken in that part of the world, they were required to learn it in addition to the language they would eventually be working with.

When the European portion of their training ended, Doug and Priscilla knew that they would ultimately serve in one of two countries: Ivory Coast or Mali. Which of the two would depend on the language they



Priscilla, with the family’s first two sons, outside their home during the language learning phase of their training

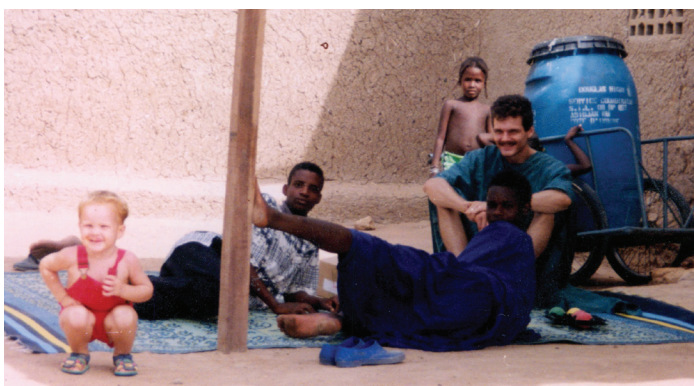
chose to specialize in. Before they could decide, however, they would need to participate in a two-month-long training program to prepare them for their future work. So, in 1994 they moved to the Ivory Coast.

During their training process, circumstances did not go as planned. “It was really rough for my family at first. We almost struck out in the beginning,” Doug recalled. “We were dropped off in a very remote village. We were supposed to have a good water supply, a good latrine, and to be stationed in a village that spoke the language we had been learning. The place where we landed failed on all three accounts.” To top it all off, the whole family contracted malaria. When their oldest son became extremely ill, they left the village.

Rethinking the Future

Thankfully, their son recovered after treatment at a hospital, but the experience in that village raised serious questions for Doug and Priscilla. “At that point, we were wondering whether we could actually handle this. We were devastated because we were sure that God had called us to be Bible translators,” Doug said. For the next year, he and Priscilla managed a center for training other future translators while they decided what to do.

Eventually, they realized that God was still working to make their shared dream of translating the Bible come true. “We began researching and scoping out other locations, visiting teams who were already in the field, doing the work of Bible translation,” said Doug. “After three different visits, we realized we could live and flourish in any of those situations, so that put us back on track.” They chose to begin learning the Fulfulde language, spoken by the Fulani people



Doug, spending a normal day learning Fulfulde

of Mali. “We decided to work in that language because the Christian Reformed Church was doing all their mission work among the Fulani without a complete translation of the Bible. We thought it would be really good to get the Scriptures into that language where they were working already to plant churches,” Doug added.

While Doug was working on translation, Priscilla was at home, helping Doug and managing the household of a family that eventually grew to include three sons, all of whom she home schooled through sixth grade.

Immersed in Work

The Greek knowledge Doug gained while at Kuyper proved to be very valuable. “It served me well while translating the Scriptures into Fulfulde, using the exegetical resources that were available,” he said. In order to learn Fulfulde, however, they would need to move beyond the knowledge gained in the classroom. This would involve immersing themselves in a community that spoke it.

“We needed to find a place that only spoke Fulfulde, so we located a village about two hours from where we lived,” Doug recalled. “Priscilla kept the family together as we basically camped for a week at a time in a mud brick house at the village. We did have a grammar book that was a bit helpful, but the main way that we learned the language was just by sitting and having conversations with people,” Doug said. He worked with a local artist to create pictures of common village scenes to use as aids. “I would point and ask people questions about what was happening in the pictures, and I would learn to be able to converse that way,” he added. The Higbys would return to their primary home for a time before coming back to the village for a week’s visit again, and again. “Being forced to communicate only in Fulfulde the whole time we were there was really what brought our language learning to success,” he said.

Grammar would prove to be one of the most complex challenges in this process. Unlike languages such as English or Latin, which rely on three genders—masculine, feminine and neuter—Fulfulde uses 18. “These are kind of like classes of words, and both the endings and beginnings all change according to those classes,” Doug said.

When the language training was finally completed, Doug joined a team that was engaged in translating the Scriptures into Fulfulde. Since they had already begun working on the New Testament, he began in the Old Testament. “We translated the book of Jonah, for starters, and then moved on to the life of Abraham in the book of Genesis,” he said. Again, however, he encountered significant setbacks. First, the local translator he had been working with was killed in a motorcycle accident. Then, the missionary he had been partnering with in the translation effort had to leave the field suddenly.

Through it all, the Higbys still felt the guiding hand of God upon their lives and work. “I began helping out with the New Testament translation after my first translator was killed, so I was in the perfect place to take up that effort and bring it to completion when the other missionary left,” recalled Doug. This perfectly ordered set of circumstances was confirmation that they were working in exactly the place God wanted them to be.



Doug and Priscilla at work using technology to train and support Bible translators

A Life-Changing Moment

After a few years, God would begin to guide the Higbys in new ways when Doug was given an opportunity to use his talents and passion for technology.

“There was a workshop for translators happening in Ivory Coast, where they would be trained in computer software used to translate the Bible,” he said. “The director asked me to come and assist because he knew that I was knowledgeable in that area.” While reluctant to take time away from his translation work, Doug accepted the invitation.

“While I was there, I had an experience that changed things for me. I worked with an Ivorian translator for a day, setting him up with our software,” said Doug. “He wrote me a few weeks later, thanking me and saying that he was now working 30 percent faster.” That one day Doug spent configuring the software eventually shaved three years off the man’s translation project. “It was a life-changing moment for me,” he said.

While still in Africa, Doug started training people from other countries. “We would bring them over and train them in the technology, then send them back so they could then train others,” he said. Eventually, Doug started doing that at a global level after the Higbys moved to Burkina Faso, while Priscilla became the administrative assistant at the International School of Ouagadougou to offset the cost of their children’s tuition.

In 2015, the Higbys moved back to Grand Rapids and continue to serve with Wycliffe’s partner organization, SIL International, supporting the work of Bible translation. Doug is the language technology use director at SIL, managing a team that ensures Bible translators have access to the technology and training to succeed, while Priscilla manages a digital team who publish technical journals and publications for linguists and translators. “We are helping ensure that we have people who are trained so that they can, in turn, train translators all around the world,” he said.

The Higbys have followed the call of God all around the world, but they have never lost sight of the passion for God’s Word they cultivated at Kuyper all those years ago. “Today, when I get to stand in front of a group and share my excitement for these Greek and Hebrew tools, I’m still carrying that same gleam of excitement in my eyes for the Scripture text that was passed onto me back in 1986,” Doug said.



AVOIDING THE CLIFFHANGER

How Your Will Reveals What Matters Most

Cliffhangers might be an amusing way to end a novel or sitcom. But it's hardly the way to conclude your own life's story. Yet this is precisely what will happen if you don't communicate your estate plans. Your loved ones will face the ultimate "cliffhanger."

Without completing and sharing your will or trust, your family will be burdened with uncertainty about how you wanted your belongings to be distributed. They won't have any clarity about the provisions you desired to make for your family or the causes close to your heart.

Instead, through sound planning, you can write a beautiful narrative that punctuates and accentuates all the goodness of your life. Your will offers a powerful testimony about what matters most to you—communicating your priorities and the core values by which you've lived.

Your completed will also protect your assets and belongings, and it helps your loved ones avoid unnecessary taxes and legal fees. In addition, you can provide for family with special needs or secure guardianship for minors through it. Finally, your last chapter can also transfer God-given resources to further the mission of ministries and other kingdom work the Lord has placed on your heart.

So, don't leave your loved ones guessing with an incomplete narrative. Having a will in place completes your life's story in a thoughtful, loving and meaningful way.

Ready to put your plan in place? Request your free copy of "The Roadmap to Your Completed Will" by emailing Katy Jorritsma at kjorritsma@kuyper.edu or calling (616) 988-3702.

In My Words

LEARNING FROM CROSS-STITCHING

During lunchtime at Kuyper, you'll find me working away at my favorite hobby—needlework, cross-stitch, to be specific. As a youngster, I sat with one of my grandmothers on the front porch of her home, where she patiently



Amy Hills

Assistant for Enrollment

introduced me to manipulating a needle and thread to create a picture on cloth. However, I eventually laid aside her instructions and returned to more energetic pursuits: dance class, riding my bike, and playing with my friends.

I grew up in northwestern Pennsylvania but went to college in North Carolina. One of the things that caught my attention about my new, Southern friends was that many did cross-stitch! It was like a club; they exchanged beautiful threads, they got together to stitch and converse, and they displayed their finished

artwork on the walls of their dorm rooms. I remembered my grandmother's attempt at teaching me how to do it, so, I took the plunge and asked a friend if she would teach me. She generously shared her stitching supplies with me, and with patience, she reintroduced me to the art of needlework.

I graduated from college with a degree in business and moved to Atlanta, Georgia, to work in the corporate world. My days were spent in fast-paced, stressful environments. To offset my hours spent in front of a computer screen, I found peace and relaxation in the quiet refuge of my stitching projects.

Over the past 40 years, needlework has taught me a lot about friendship, community, education, history, the Bible, textiles, creativity, global craftsmanship and myself. When my son started school, I grew interested in education and became a substitute teacher. I found it fascinating when young girls, and sometimes boys, used needle and thread to create memory samplers for learning the alphabet, numbers and short Bible verses. I also volunteered to teach English as a second language at the Refugee Sewing Society. Best of both worlds for me—I taught English in the morning, then it was off to sewing, knitting and crocheting for the rest of the afternoon!

My interest in education and lifelong learning led me to work at Kuyper College where I support the College's admissions and financial aid initiatives. I enjoy the Kuyper community and being a part of bridging prospective students to an academic path leading to their future endeavors. God gives us knowledge and wisdom to glorify Christ and gifts and talents to exercise our creativity to bless one another.

Time to stitch!

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

The Faith in the Vaccine Ambassadors Program

Recently, Kuyper College was invited to participate in a program aimed at increasing COVID-19 vaccination rates among people of faith. The Faith in the Vaccine Ambassadors program helps provide students and faculty with resources to educate their peers on the vaccine. Conceived by the Interfaith Youth Core in partnership with the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, project participants are trained in the medical basics of the vaccine as well as techniques for respectful listening. The ultimate goal is to combat vaccine hesitancy from within communities of faith through genuine, empathetic conversations.

Dr. Lisa Hooageboom is one of the faculty leaders overseeing the students participating. “We spent time over the summer with four current students and two recent graduates, receiving training and discussing what we were learning. The idea is to learn about and promote vaccination against COVID-19,” said Dr. Hooageboom.

The project’s goals include fostering conversations with family and friends, connecting through social media, assisting local health departments, partnering with church groups, as well as working on the Kuyper campus to deliver accurate information and incentives for vaccinations. As time goes on, these objectives have continued to take shape in different ways. Dr. Hooageboom said, “We’ve had students volunteering at places like the Cherry Health Mobile clinic in a few Grand Rapids locations, such as the Hispanic Center and the First AME



On-campus panel discussion on the COVID-19 vaccine

Church.” Other creative methods participants have used to spread the word about getting vaccinated include designing and distributing fliers with credible facts in both English and Spanish.

One of the ways students chose to engage their peers on campus was by hosting a panel discussion on the COVID-19 vaccine on campus.

Andrew Zwart, a faculty member who is also overseeing the Vaccine Ambassadors program, said, “We received a lot of positive feedback from the administration, faculty and students. We also heard from those who disagreed, reminding me that the path toward higher rates of vaccination is not a straight line.”

Dr. Hooageboom emphasized the opportunity the Faith in the Vaccine Ambassadors program has presented. “It’s been a great way for students to exercise their Christian worldview muscles,” she said. “Participants are learning and teaching others to sift through the science surrounding COVID-19 vaccinations from a Christian perspective.”



The Zondervan Chapel is one of the many campus buildings that received new roofs

Investing in Campus Improvements

Kuyper’s campus is both beautiful and functional. To ensure it continues to be so, there is a short- and long-range facilities maintenance and improvement plan in place. Implementing it is a never-ending task for which Ray Thomas, director of campus operations, is responsible. “On a facility the size of Kuyper, site maintenance and improvements never stop,” he said.

Recently, the parking lots have been redone and restriped. In addition, a significant undertaking saw roof replacements taking place in 95% of all campus buildings. At the same time, major HVAC systems and equipment have been replaced and upgraded to provide more efficient cooling and heating and substantial energy savings.

In addition, significant investments have been made to better support students, faculty and staff. For example, the latest in classroom technology and furniture greeted students this fall. So was a vastly improved Wi-Fi network deployed throughout the

entire campus and all dorms. A new campus-wide, camera-driven security system was also installed to ensure Kuyper continues to be one of the more secure and safe college campuses in the country.

Finally, dorm rooms have also received a thorough refresh with new workstations, fixtures and mattresses.

The age of COVID-19 has also brought changes to the whole campus cleaning process and completely changed the depth and frequency of cleanings. “Now is not just cleaning,” said Thomas. “It’s the products we use for cleaning, how we’re cleaning, what we’re cleaning, and when we’re cleaning—several times a day.”

While Thomas agrees that the recent investments made on campus are physical, he also believes it sends a message to current and potential students. “At Kuyper,” he said, “we will take excellent care of you.”

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Sylvia Fruge

Growing up, my parents believed in God, but His teachings and Christian values were not a priority. The only time I went to church was with my grandmother, and that was rare. Life was hard, and there was no room for emotions or complaining.

I went to Northview High School, which I hated. In my teenage years, I was very violent and angry. Always fighting, getting suspended, and never doing homework. I was teased a lot because we lived in poverty, so I never had my hair done or wore nice clothes or shoes. I went to a few Bible clubs in those years, but Christian life wasn't my reality. Because it wasn't shown to me at home, I didn't take it seriously.

As a young adult, I had my children—Sincere (14), Andre (13), Tristian (9) and Annaliese (4 1/2). I loved them, but I kept wondering if struggling as a young mother was all life had to offer. So, five years ago, I moved to a new neighborhood because I wanted more in life and was determined to find it. Part of that decision involved taking my kids to church. So I started Googling churches in the area, and I found Unison Christian Church, which had moved in down the street at the same time we did. I took my kiddos with me, and I thought that if they couldn't accept us all, then we didn't belong there.

We weren't judged, and our circumstances didn't matter. We were greeted with open arms, and it was so genuine. It was all about God and how He loved us. After attending for about a month, I asked Jesus to come back into my life. Though it felt amazing, it was still a hard transition from the life I had been living. Through that process, I learned it was OK to ask for help and also about the Christian life from other people in the church. Eventually, my kids were baptized as well.

It seemed like everyone in my new church family was educated, married, had careers, and was financially stable. I wanted all of those things for my children too. I had attempted to go back to college when my boys were babies, but it didn't work out. So once my kids were all

in school, I started the addiction studies program at GRCC. After a year, I realized it wasn't for me, so I transferred to Blue Heron Academy. I became state certified in holistic healthcare, diet and weight management, life coaching, herbal medicine, and clinical nutrition. I was excited to show my kids because I didn't want them to have the life I had growing up.

I still wanted an associate's and a bachelor's, however. I reconnected with an old friend on Facebook, and I found out about Kuyper College from them. I had no idea private Christian colleges existed before that, so I was very excited. I remember taking a tour and shadowing Dr. Fisher's class. He was talking about the images and symbols in Revelation and what they meant. He was very knowledgeable about the topic, and I felt the passion he had for teaching. Everyone there was so nice and friendly. I applied and got accepted. Being on campus was like a breath of fresh air, and I knew it was where God wanted me to be. I've been studying at Kuyper since 2019, and I can't imagine being anywhere else.

I am the only person in my family that is married and only the second to go to college. I have been the lead teacher of the middle schoolers at my church for three years and just became the new resource manager as well. I also work part time for the Department of Health and Human Services as a home help aid for seniors. I recently married my husband, James. We had known each other for 12 years. He is a great husband and stepfather. We also moved to Kentwood, and I love it. I finally feel complete. After Kuyper, I want to run a Christian-based, low-income housing program to help families become self-sufficient and bring them to Christ. The name of my business will be FAITH (Families Allocated in Truth and Happiness).



CLASS **2024**

HOME **Grand Rapids, Michigan**

MAJOR **Social Work**