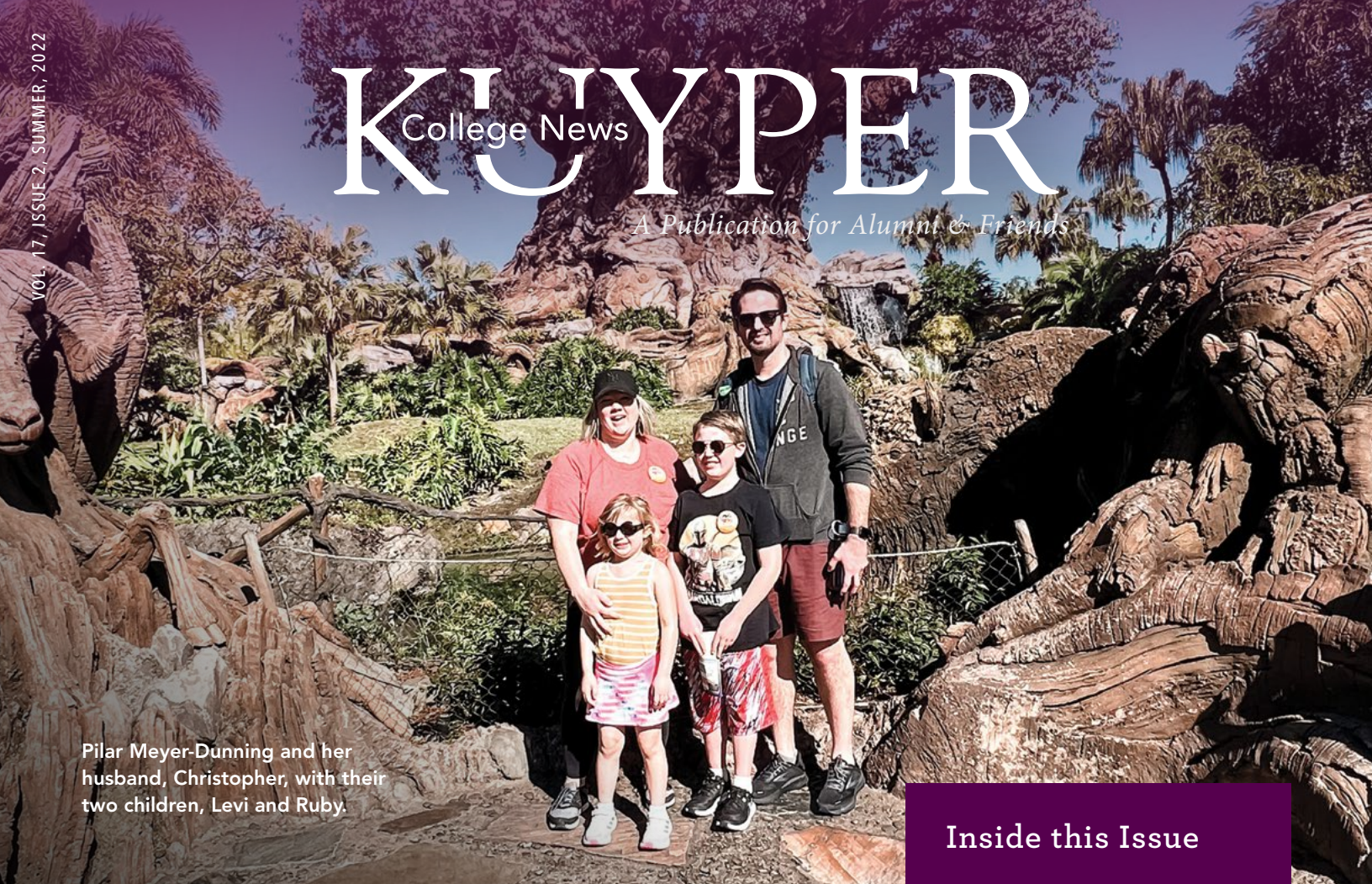


KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends



Pilar Meyer-Dunning and her husband, Christopher, with their two children, Levi and Ruby.

Inside this Issue

MY STORY

PILAR MEYER-DUNNING

ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

The world created by God was a place of absolute and unchanging beauty, where all things existed in harmony with Him. Scripture tells us God saw everything He made and called it good. But sadly, things did not stay that way. Through Adam and Eve’s rebellion, sin, brokenness and death entered the world, spreading throughout creation until nothing was left untouched.

However, we know that Jesus’ victory over sin, brokenness and death has already been accomplished, even if it is not yet fully realized. Still, God invites us into His ongoing redemptive work as stewards of creation and agents of its reconciliation.

Alumni Profile

CLASS
2006

HOME
Grand Rapids, Michigan

CAREER
Executive Social Services Director at the Salvation Army

FAMILY
Husband, Christopher, and two children: Levi and Ruby

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KUYPER.EDU

The Light of the World

Stars. Bright, shining lights in the night sky have always been a source of hope and inspiration for God's people. God promised Abraham that he would "Make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky" (Gen. 22:17). The Psalmist pondered, "When I consider the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?" (Ps. 8:3-4). The Magi told King Herod, "We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him" (Mt. 2:2).

We are called "to shine like stars as we hold out the word of life" (Phil. 2:15). As children of God, we are to embody hope and inspire others to follow Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

Just as God commanded the stars to shine brightly in the night sky, God calls us to shine brightly in a world darkened by sin. We are called to do everything without complaining or arguing, to have a right attitude and commending speech. We are called to become blameless and pure, to live above reproach. And, we are called to hold out the word of life, boldly living out and proclaiming God's gospel message (Phil. 2:14-15).

If we're honest with ourselves, we don't always shine as brightly as we should as

individuals nor as Christian communities. There are times when our brilliance grows dim through pursuing power, ignoring abuses and injustices, and focusing on politics rather than people. As a result, the Light fades, and those looking at it can't see what they need to see; Jesus Christ.

Paul understands the reality of our Light growing dim. He helps us understand our calling to shine like stars by including the Christ hymn in Philippians 2:5-11. Christ, who humbled and emptied himself, who is exalted and glorified by God, is our pattern for Christian living. The only way we can shine as stars is to live a life of humble obedience, finding encouragement from being united with



Christ, comfort from His love, and power through His Spirit.

This summer, let's take time to gaze at the stars in the night sky and give thanks for those who are shining the Light of Christ in our dark world—for Pilar Meyer-Dunning and the other alumni highlighted in this newsletter. Then, let's reflect on how we can shine brightly and boldly as we fix our eyes and hearts on Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

Shining like stars,

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

"If we're honest with ourselves, we don't always shine as brightly as we should as individuals nor as Christian communities. There are times when our brilliance grows dim through pursuing power, ignoring abuses and injustices, and focusing on politics rather than people."

Kuyper Events



To refer a student, scan the QR Code.

would be a great fit here? If so, we would like to start a conversation with them!

Refer a Student

We are launching a new referral program that will allow you to impact Kuyper's future community directly.

For example, are you part of a church youth group with students who would thrive here? Will you be working at camp?

Do you have younger siblings or other family members who



Save the Date

Kuyper's Carnival at the Ballpark

October 1, 2022, at LMCU Ballpark.



Casey Cohoon

“I noticed many churches were struggling with the business and marketing side of things, and I wanted to use my abilities to help.”

KUYPER ALUMNI

A Whirl After Graduation

Casey Cohoon knows how to multitask. Since graduating from Kuyper in May of 2019, she has been a resident director at a university, a personal banker, earned her master’s degree, and is running a successful freelance marketing endeavor. However, no matter where life takes her, she carries the skills she gained and the lessons she learned at Kuyper.

Although born and raised in Plainwell, Michigan, Casey hadn’t heard of Kuyper College until her father, a veteran youth pastor, spoke at an event on campus. “I originally planned on attending another Christian college, but then I scheduled a Kuyper visit. When I walked in, it instantly felt like home,” she recalled, “I canceled all my other college tours. I knew Kuyper was where I was meant to be.”

Casey also knew what she wanted to major in. “I was a Business Leadership major from the get-go,” she said. However, as she progressed into her studies, she became interested in using the skills she was learning to help churches flourish. “Marketing, specifically social media marketing, became my passion fast. I noticed many churches were struggling with the business and marketing side of things, and I wanted to use my abilities to help,” she said.

Soon after graduating from Kuyper, an opportunity came along. “I wasn’t sure what my next step would be when I got an email from a friend who was a resident director (RD) at the University of Sioux Falls in South Dakota. They wanted to hire another

RD,” Casey said. This job came with a great benefit: she could earn a master’s degree for free. “So, I decided to go to South Dakota.”

Her time as a resident assistant at Kuyper had prepared her well for this new path. She already had experience engaging with younger students. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, she was able to use her social media marketing skills. “I had to get creative with my activities, so with my social media marketing emphasis from Kuyper, I was prepared to come up with new ways of connecting with my students,” she said.

After graduating with her Master of Business Administration degree, Casey started her own freelance consultancy business. She works primarily with churches and non-profits, helping them fine-tune their marketing presence. “Home Helpers is a client. They hire caregivers and place them to help individuals with their daily tasks,” she said. “After I helped launch a recruitment program, they went from three applications a month to almost 40.” In addition to her consultancy work, Casey is also a personal banker at a bank in Plainwell.

Casey recently accepted a position as the outreach and discipleship coordinator at her home church, First Baptist Church of Plainwell. She plans to continue this work alongside her freelance and personal banking endeavors. “This is a great next step for me. I love my church, and the Bible and business skills I learned at Kuyper have brought me to the point where I can succeed,” she said.



Kuyper College International Golf Scramble

Join us on August 22 for a beautiful day of golf and fellowship at the historic Muskegon Country Club, one of West Michigan’s finest courses. We seek to raise \$75,000 for the Ambassador Scholarship Fund. This scholarship helps international students attend Kuyper College by providing up to 85% of their tuition. Upon completing their studies at Kuyper, these students and alumni return home to serve Christ’s church around the world. **Your participation through play, sponsorship or donations will help Kuyper equip students to make a global impact for Christ.**

For Sponsorship and Player Registration go to kuyper.edu/golf

Pilar Meyer-Dunning, a current adjunct professor at, and graduate from Kuyper, has worked tirelessly to bring about God's redemption to His created world. She has years of experience working in various aspects of social work, knowing it plays a crucial part in God's plan. "I believe God uses His people to help show His faithfulness to the world," said Pilar. "It is part of my job as a Christian to help God's image-bearers thrive in the world He created."

Pilar grew up as the child of a pastor. Her family lived in several different locations in the Midwest before settling in Grand Rapids.

"At Kuyper, I found that I love encouraging and coming alongside people, and that's why I landed in social work," she said. As she progressed through her social work program, Pilar fell in love with the field. "Social work at Kuyper is such a great program. It trained me to be successful; I found that it was my calling," she noted.

During her internship, Pilar built skills that would become vital to her future career. "Through Kuyper, I interned at Spectrum Health. I appreciated it because, in social work, having a significant internship is critically important," she said. She worked in care management while supporting families emotionally through diagnoses and crises and performing mental health and psychological assessments. This involved interacting directly with, advocating for, and helping patients. "One of the best things about the Kuyper program is that it puts you in places where you get a real, authentic experience of working in your field. Working through class issues and the lived experience of the internship creates a remarkable space to grow professionally," she said.

Striving to Build Authentic Relationships

At Kuyper, Pilar was exposed to a particular area of social work that eventually would become her passion. "We started learning about human trafficking, and I became invested in education and prevention," she recalled. Soon after graduation in 2006, an opportunity came for her to pursue this passion further. "The Salvation Army had an opening for an anti-trafficking position in Chicago, so I moved there," she said.

"I started out doing outreach in Chicago, working to connect with folks who were experiencing homelessness or spending time on the street. The goal was to identify survivors of trafficking in the city," said Pilar. She and a partner would take essential supplies into at-risk neighborhoods, interacting with community residents. "Getting to

know what it was like to live unhoused was a big part of that," she said. "We met people who lived in marginalized communities or who struggled with mental health issues and engaged with them in a way where we could build authentic relationships."

During her time in Chicago, Pilar said she learned the value of making the people she interacted with feel truly seen: "What I heard from people who lived on the street or had been trafficked was that something as simple as making eye contact was huge for them." She knows there is a fear that such interactions come with expectations. However, this fear is often unfounded. "The people I engaged with told me that, when they are looked at and acknowledged as human beings, that is extremely meaningful to them," she said. Seeing the humanity of the people she serves and showing them the respect they deserve as image-bearers of God continues to inform Pilar's work.

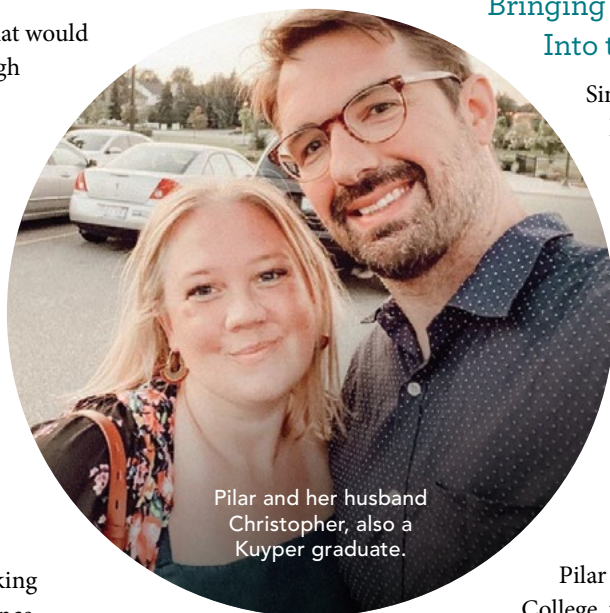
Bringing Real-World Experience Into the Classroom

Since that job in Chicago, several years have passed, and Pilar is now a West Michigan resident again. Her present career evolved from working in direct service to managing a program to now working in administration over those areas. "Currently, I am the executive social services director at the Salvation Army, overseeing social services for the Western Michigan and Northern Indiana region. Specifically, I have oversight of all our Kent County programs," she said.

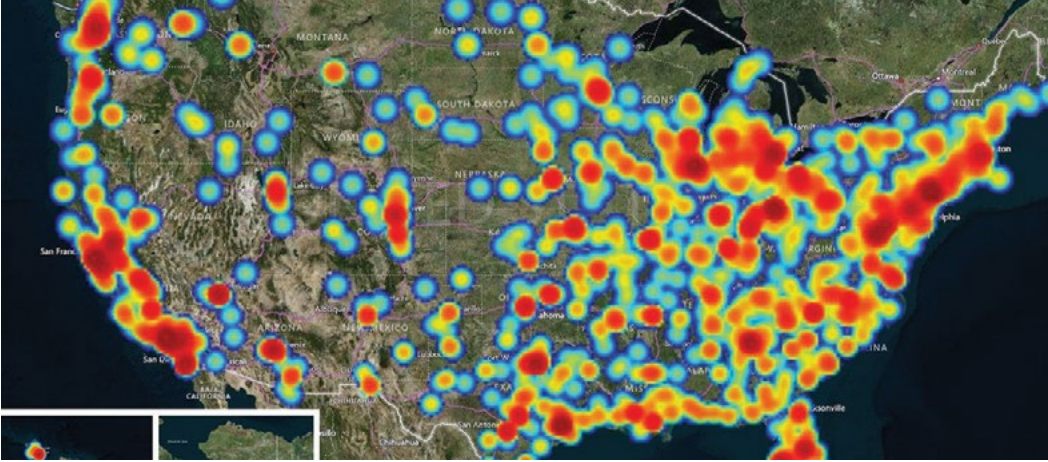
Pilar has now found her way back to Kuyper College, where she currently teaches as an adjunct professor of social work. She brings her knowledge and years of field experience to her teaching and students. "My approach is very practical. I talk about theoretical concepts, but I always integrate that with actual social work practice," she said. "I've also had Kuyper students intern under me at the Salvation Army. I've even hired a few, so that's been a great way of giving back to Kuyper."

The Reality of Human Trafficking

One thing she hopes to pass on to her students is her passion for fighting human trafficking. An essential part of that is dispelling some of the myths surrounding it. "There's sometimes this idea that human trafficking is this international issue or something that happens somewhere else. We talk a lot about places like Thailand and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Still, the reality is that, while looking very different, trafficking happens in our community too," she said. For her, understanding this is not about



Pilar and her husband Christopher, also a Kuyper graduate.



U.S national human trafficking statistical heat-map of hotline reporting calls.

PolarisProject.org

“There’s sometimes this idea that human trafficking is this international issue or something that happens somewhere else. We talk a lot about places like Thailand and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Still, the reality is that, while looking very different, trafficking happens in our community too.”

minimizing the gravity of what happens in other parts of the world. Instead, it is about having an accurate picture of what human trafficking looks like in our own communities to combat it better.

The reality of human trafficking, Pilar said, is often very different than the sensationalized version the public sees in movies and television shows. “It is like a relationship where somebody grooms someone else to perform and behave a certain way—the kind of grooming we find in sexual abuse and domestic violence,” she said. “Traffickers create power over their victims and exert that power to exploit them,” she added.

“In the United States, and specifically in West Michigan, trafficking can look like forced prostitution. People may be forced to participate in sexual activity in exchange for money or something else, like a place to stay,” she said. “If it is for money, they may then have that money taken by the person who is trafficking them. It can also look like people trapped in an environment like an illicit massage parlor.” However, she explained that human trafficking does occur in contexts that do not involve sexual activity: “There is also labor trafficking, where people are being exploited for their labor. This often happens in the farming and agricultural community, where fair wages are not being paid or garnished.” She added that there are threats of harm to family members, or of taking away immigration papers, or reporting undocumented workers to immigration services.

Pilar knows that these are difficult, uncomfortable topics to wrestle with, but she also recognizes that we must do so to confront the specter of human trafficking.

Human Trafficking by the Numbers*

55%
of trafficking victims are women and children

12-14
the average age a teen enters the sex trade in the U.S.

\$150 billion
Reportedly, the profit generated every year by human trafficking

45 million
Number of people affected globally by human trafficking (with 2 million children) in over 167 countries

80%
of human trafficking cases involve sexual exploitation

20%
of human trafficking cases involve labor exploitation

“It’s important for our culture to acknowledge the oversexualization of women and girls,” she explained. She said that understanding and facing these issues is the first step toward making real change in our world.

Witnessing God’s Faithfulness

After all her years in the social work field, Pilar is still carrying with her truths she learned as a student at Kuyper.

“Understanding it’s not me with the power was a big lesson for me,” she recalled. “Of course, I went into studying social work with this idea that I was the one with the answers and thinking I was going to save everybody, but that’s just not reality.” She has watched this idea play out in her career as well. “Throughout my time, I’ve learned that I’m not the expert. The people I work with are the experts in their own lives, and they know what they need. The relationship part is about connecting with someone and figuring things out together,” she added.

To Pilar, her work is ultimately about participating in what God is already doing to transform and restore His creation. Every time she is part of someone escaping human trafficking or addressing factors in a community that feeds trafficking, she is helping to fulfill God’s will. That is the hope that sustains her when the work surrounding her feels dark and heavy. “God is redeeming all things: people, places, relationships, communities. Seeing that lived out is such a cool thing. It’s watching God’s faithfulness playing out in real-time. It is amazing,” she said.

*Sources: Human Trafficking Detection for Financial Institutions by Timea Nagy, International Labour Organization, The Freedom Project and U.S. Department of Homeland Security.



Who's That in the Spotlight?

You know this person. We all do.

No matter the conversation, they always steer the topic back to themselves. It's annoying.

Jesus told the parable of one such person: the rich farmer. In the all-too-familiar story, the farmer uses a bumper crop to bump God out of the spotlight. The high yield came from the soil, but the farmer takes the credit. (Luke 12:17, NIV)

With God checked into the shadows, the rich farmer plans to tear down his barns and build massive ones in their place. He smugly dreams about when he'll *"have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."* (Luke 12:19, NIV)

Truth is, we're all this person, too. We're prone to making everything about ourselves—our accomplishments, our family, our wealth.

But Jesus turns our living upside down and even redefines wealth. *True wealth* is making everything about God instead of ourselves.

For the farmer, this still could have meant building bigger barns—but only because he dreamed about great ways to pay forward God's blessing.

What does a life lived richly toward God mean for you? A good way to begin is by answering this simple question: *How might Jesus want me to honor God with my abundance?*

To learn more about other giving or estate planning options, please contact the Kuyper Advancement Office at (616) 988-3662 or email advancement@kuyper.edu.

In My Words

GOD IS ABLE

Having the opportunity to share via the written word is like being handed a beautifully blank canvas; the possibilities are endless. There are a multitude of world happenings to which I could speak, from a global virus to European war.

These past few years have certainly affected us in ways we may never fully comprehend.



Jennifer Colin
Assistant Professor of
Social Work, Social Work
Program Director

As someone with a propensity toward worry, I have tried to focus on the positive—for example, embracing the lockdown as a chance to spend more time with my son, whose departure for college loomed ever closer. But despite my efforts, anxiety occasionally rears its ugly head. I have found it is one thing to name the sovereignty of God, but another entirely to rest in this knowledge.

It was in the midst of a season of disquietude last year that the prospect of a career change unexpectedly surfaced. Though teaching at a Christian college has been my dream, the concept of a new vocation during a pandemic was daunting. Growing up I was inspired by Joni Eareckson Tada, who became a quadriplegic at 16, yet did not let that sway her trust in God or the seeking of His will. Among her well-known quotes is this: "Faith isn't the ability to believe long and far into the misty future. It's simply taking God at His Word and taking the next step." Was God leading me to something else? I knew the moment I stepped into Kuyper's chapel; the answer was a resounding yes.

Adjusting to a different place and position is not without challenges, but focusing on the positive has not been difficult. In fact, it's hard to express the peace and joy that I've experienced since beginning my recent journey. I've felt God's presence and affirmation in so many ways; it is truly a gift to be here.

We all struggle with worry at times, some of us more than others. But regardless of what we are enduring, the Bible tells us in I Peter 5:7 to "Cast all your cares on Him, for He cares for you." Trust in His love. Search His leading. It is rarely simple or easy, but it is always worth it.

So, although the words on this proverbial slate may not ring particularly profound or memorable, I encourage you to consider this: God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20). Don't be afraid to let Him show you.

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

A Translation of Abraham Kuyper's Writings

Over the last 10 years, Kuyper College has been part of an effort to translate the work of its namesake, Abraham Kuyper, into English. The College is pleased to announce that this effort has finally come to fruition. Publication of a significant series of Kuyper's writings on public theology was recently completed. The "Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology," never available in English, introduces a new audience to one of Christianity's most thoughtful public theologians. The collection comprises eight important works and is divided into 12 volumes, representing a historic moment in the study of Kuyper. The College is honored to have been part of the process.



Abraham Kuyper

Back in 2011, Dr. Melvin Flikkema, then provost at Kuyper College and now co-editor of the completed collection of works, began participating in talks with a group of scholars from the United States and Europe to discuss the formation of the Kuyper Translation Society. The vision for the formation of this group came from the late Dr. Rimmer de Vries, a longtime friend of the College. In the fall of 2011, he initiated a meeting at Calvin Theological Seminary, where this idea was solidified. "For some time, the idea of establishing a Kuyper Translation Society has been in the minds of several friends," he said at the time. "So it is with great satisfaction that it now may become a reality."

Dr. de Vries believed the College was the perfect fit to take on the responsibility of administering the Kuyper Translation Society. "If Abraham Kuyper were to visit Grand Rapids today, he most likely

would hang his top hat at Kuyper College," he said in 2011.

The College partnered with The Acton Institute, a think tank that promotes a free, virtuous society characterized by individual liberty and sustained by religious principles, to accomplish its goal. By the year 2015, they had found a publisher, Lexham Press, and announced the publication.

The "Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology" includes such publications as Kuyper's "Common Grace," printed in three volumes.

Within its pages, Kuyper presents to the church a vision for cultural engagement rooted in the humanity Christians share with the rest of the world. He articulated that belief by saying, "The non-Christian world has not been handed over to Satan, surrendered to fallen humanity, or consigned to fate." Kuyper firmly believed that, though many people in the world will remain unconverted, God still shows His grace to the world.

As Abraham Kuyper's influence on public philosophy and Christian thought continues to grow, the importance of this newly translated work cannot be overstated. First, it provides an in-depth view of Kuyper's thinking in an accessible format, illuminating a Kuyper who continually addressed his day's culture, context and church. It also provides an opportunity for a new generation of readers to hear his message of Christian culture-making. As Dr. de Vries said at the project's beginning, "Translations are not an end in themselves, but a means to be better servants in God's world."

Investing in Campus Lunch 'n Learn: Where Are They Now?

Kuyper College is a place that integrates the lessons students learn in the classroom with the knowledge they gain outside its walls. One of the many unique ways the College does this is through the Lunch 'n Learn series. This is part of the Ora Et Labora initiative, where speakers are invited to share about their work and how their faith impacts that work. Lunch 'n Learn is a time where students and staff can hear from these speakers in the more intimate setting of the dining hall and, afterwards, have the opportunity to engage in table discussions as they share a meal together.

The theme for this year's Lunch 'n Learn series is *Where Are They Now? What I Know for Sure*. During these sessions, members of the Kuyper community, such as alumni or

faculty members, share insights they have gained from their ministry journeys and life lessons they have learned along the way. The most recent speaker was Brent Lamberts, director of student ministries and pastor of family life at Westview Christian Reformed Church. Other speakers have included Monique Carter, Isaac Riddle, Maddie Berce, Jessica Maddox and Shelley Eckenwiler.

Brent Lamberts is a veteran in the field of youth ministry. He has served as a youth pastor for 17 years in three different churches. He strongly believes in the importance of youth and families in ways that are life-giving and life-building. During his presentation, he spoke about how church-based youth ministry has changed over the years, as well as the role family has

played in his career. "I started out as a single guy before getting married four years ago. I then had to learn how to do ministry in the midst of a pandemic, as well as having premature twins who spent months in the NICU," he said.

By featuring a wide variety of perspectives and life experiences during the Lunch 'n Learn series, Kuyper facilitates conversations about pressing issues related to ministry, culture, society and work. Each of the speakers shares their unique perspective on what it is like to see God working in their lives and careers. In doing so, the wider Kuyper community is able to learn from each other and expand their view of what it looks like to impact the world for Christ.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Thiara Herrera-Leiva

I come from a family of “*mujeres fuertes*,” strong women. My Oma Ingrid and my mom are probably my most significant role models. But I can't forget to mention my “*tias*” and “*tios*,” aunties and uncles, who also helped raise me. Back home, a child's upbringing is a whole village endeavor, and I have been extremely fortunate to have a loving family that allowed me to be my loud, extroverted and histrionic self ever since I was little. I was raised bilingual and bicultural with German and Chilean traditions. I did not grow up in a Christian home, but my mom has supported my faith ever since I started to go to youth group back in 10th grade.

Growing up, I was an all-activities student—*theater, dance, choir, volleyball, basketball and swim team*. Yet, I did not have many friends in school, and like most teenagers, I struggled with a sense of belonging and identity. At the suggestion of a teacher, my mom took me to a church youth group meeting to make new friends. Little did she or I know that God was going to use this opportunity not only for me to make friendships, but also to create a relationship with Him. As I grew older and closer to becoming a senior, a “*ministry voice*” in my head kept coming back, but as stubborn as we humans can be, I ignored it.

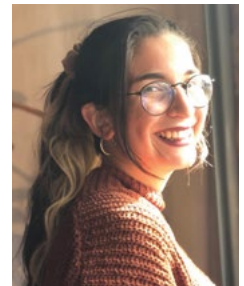
After graduating from high school in 2016, I took a few gap years for a season of discernment. I worked in a nanny exchange program in Nashville, Tennessee, for one year. There, I met a couple who invited me to be part of a church plant team. Without thinking about it, something in me told me to say yes. And it was in that church I found my fire for ministry reignited. After a while, they suggested that I should look into attending a Christian college. As I began searching for and applying to colleges in the U.S., I found myself drawn to Kuyper. I could see God's hand in the process, from the “*random*” opportunity to visit just when I was spending time with friends in the area to meeting with professors. Here, I've seen God's provision time and time again. I'm grateful for financial aid and the opportunity to work on campus, for they have helped make my dream of studying abroad a reality.

However, coming to Kuyper was only the beginning of my journey. Staying has been the most challenging part—I miss my family. Yet, now I have many families. Some have opened their arms and homes to welcome me for holidays, school breaks, and random soup and movie Sundays. Others, like my faculty family, encourage me when I doubt myself or when the world has gotten to me, while also challenging me to do more because they know I can do better. My staff family pray, laugh and cry with me when I most need it and will give me a hand to get back on my feet when I fall. And my student family has embraced and supported me, even when we do not see eye to eye, because we have one thing in common—the “*love of God that surpasses all understanding*.”

At Kuyper, I have found fertile ground where I can grow deep roots and bloom. I've been able to work in Food Service, learning people's favorite foods, and in Student Development as a student coach, where I get to champion and empower students in all areas.

As I look back over the past two years, my faith, love and knowledge of the Lord have grown immensely. I remember freshman year Thiara, scared of five-page essays. Today, I write without fear because I know I'm capable. I remember the days of not being sure about staying in the social work program—praying and listening to that voice deep within—the Holy Spirit that directed me toward ministry leadership.

Today, with so many dreams and hopes, I look into the future without clarity on how and where. Graduate school or maybe seminary on the horizon? I don't know, but I'm confident that better people could not surround me to walk with me amid those questions.



CLASS **2024**

HOME **Santiago, Chile**

MAJOR **Ministry Leadership**