



# KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends

Gordon and Dee Geurink with their young family during his days as a student at Reformed Bible Institute.

## MY STORY

# GORDON GEURINK

## SAVED TO SERVE

Gordon Geurink is a Kuyper College graduate who has spent his life trusting God's guidance. The 98-year-old served in the European theater of World War II, planted numerous churches in southwestern Michigan, and ministered to the inmates of several local jails.

He grew up in a small town during a time in which many modern conveniences—things like electric lights, running water and indoor plumbing—hadn't yet reached rural communities like his. He left school after eighth grade, not uncommon at the time, though he thinks now that while not always the best student, he had the smarts.

## Alumni Profile

CLASS 1963

HOME Shelbyville, Mich.

FAMILY Married to wife, Dee, for 65 years before her death in 2012. The couple's three children are Allen, Phyllis and Doug.

### CAREER

- World War II veteran and Purple Heart recipient
- Auto body shop employee before opening his own shop with a friend
- Church planter and pastor
- Jail chaplain

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# Testimonies of Love In Action

This year, week-by-week, we've focused verse-by-verse on our theme passage, Romans 12. This Scripture has profoundly influenced me as I've heard chapel messages and faculty devotions, listened to the text on Bible Gateway during my commute to and from campus, and attempted to memorize the entire chapter.

As we end this academic year and our study of this passage, I have three takeaways.

First, I've been challenged by the Apostle Paul's urging to practice being a "living sacrifice" (vv. 1-2). For most people today, this is a very strange concept. How do these two words even fit together? I understand this to mean that, dependent on God's mercy and as an act of worship, I need to surrender every square inch of my heart, mind and will in service to God and others. I'm thankful for Gordon Geurink (class of 1963), featured in our cover story, who has faithfully demonstrated a living-sacrifice lifestyle as a U.S. veteran, businessman, church planter and chaplain.

Second, reflecting on verses 3-8, my gratitude has increased immensely for the variety of gifts and abilities that are embodied by our students, staff and faculty. "Many Members—One Body" is the theme for our Spring Gala Celebration, and it's also the reality of our Kuyper community. Senior student Isaac de la Rosa says, "Kuyper has been a breath of fresh air," and Alyssa Patton, alumna and staff member, shares, "The more time I take to reflect on my past and present experience at

Kuyper, the more I realize it is the people who make Kuyper."

Third, every time I read Paul's call to "love in action" in verses 9-21, I think about a new way in which I can apply these pithy admonitions and encouragements. "Love must be sincere... never be lacking in zeal... be faithful in prayer... mourn with those who mourn... practice hospitality... overcome evil with good."

This year, I've witnessed the Kuyper community putting these words into practice, with Coach Bailey mentoring student-athletes, Ray Thomas and Chef Jeff Bettig serving first responders, Spiritual Life interns leading Monday morning prayer and coffee times, faculty members guiding students as they integrate their faith and learning and all of us expressing sympathy to colleagues who lost loved ones. And I, and a whole host of Kuyper alumni, can attest to the lasting legacy of Dick and Thea Van Halsema who put these words into practice their entire lives. These are testimonies of love in action.

With Romans 12 speaking so poignantly to our faith walk this year, where do we go from here as a Kuyper community?



"I understand this to mean that, dependent on God's mercy and as an act of worship, I need to surrender every square inch of my heart, mind and will in service to God and others."

I welcome hearing from you at [officeofthepresident@kuyper.edu](mailto:officeofthepresident@kuyper.edu) if you have a suggested Scripture passage for our theme next year.

In closing, I echo the words of Gordon Geurink, "I really thank God for Kuyper College!"

Grateful to serve,

**Dr. Patricia R. Harris**  
President

## Kuyper News and Events

### Births

Chris and **Kelsey (Bos) Bloom** (2016) welcomed Skylar Mae on September 1, 2022.

Kenneth and **Amy (Alkema) Holubeck** (2009) welcomed twin girls, Eloise Hope and Phoebe Lynn, on January 13, 2023.

Ron and **Taylor (Downs) Miller** (2004) welcomed Gregory Ronald on February 10, 2023.

### Professional Development

**Jennie Compagner** (2007) graduated from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary with an MA in Ministry Leadership.

**Nellie DeVries** (1998) retired from Corewell Health (formerly Spectrum Health) after 45 years as a registered nurse.

**Leah Jueckstock** (2020) started a new position as a social worker at Corewell Health (formerly Spectrum Health).

**Eddie Mercado** (2016) accepted a new position with Haven Today as content assistant to the president.

**Nicole Romero** (2018) graduated from Calvin Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity in August of 2022 and is now a resident chaplain at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services.

**Shelby VanHouten** (2014) started a new position as a behavioral health resource specialist at Trinity Health's Neuroscience Campus.

# Willing to Wait: Nicole Horstman Helps Students Make Healthy Choices

When Nicole (DeWindt) Horstman was in third grade, she accompanied her father to his choir performance at Mel Trotter Ministries, which serves people experiencing homelessness in Grand Rapids.

“I grew up in a stable, loving home, so it was the first time I remember realizing that others lived differently than I did,” Horstman said. This experience left her with a desire to serve others through nonprofit work.

Horstman shared her journey toward realizing this dream with the Kuyper community as part of Ora Et Labora, a weekly time where speakers come to campus to talk about their work and how their faith impacts that work.

“When I came to Kuyper, I enrolled in the business leadership program because I wanted to prepare for administrative roles within nonprofit work,” Horstman said. After graduation, she enrolled in an applied linguistics master’s program, with the goal of serving others by teaching English as a second language.

It was then that an old friend from her days volunteering with Willing to Wait (W2W),

an educational program that helps students make healthy choices about relationships and sexuality, presented her with a job opportunity. “He suggested I apply for a job scheduling their education program in local schools,” she said.

Horstman had first encountered W2W as a middle schooler. She then continued with W2W when she enrolled in Kuyper College after high school. Kuyper’s location and the flexibility of her Kuyper job made it an ideal fit for her situation. “W2W met right across the street, so I was able to keep participating as a Kuyper student,” she said.

Because of her many years volunteering with W2W, her friend’s suggestion that she apply for the school education program job was intriguing to her. Now, Horstman oversees W2W as the education director, helping bring messages of affirmation to local students. And she couldn’t be happier.

“We want them to know that no matter their circumstances or choices, they are human beings with immense worth,” she said.

The work, she added, is her true calling.



Nicole (DeWindt) Horstman credits her time as a student for helping her understand and work within secular culture from a biblical worldview.

“God opened my heart to serving others through providing compassionate pregnancy and reproductive care,” she said. “As my needs and life situation has changed, God has opened up opportunities for me. He has continued to tug on my heart and tell me that this is where I’m supposed to be.”

Horstman, a 2017 graduate, feels that her time at Kuyper prepared her well for her current vocation.

“Kuyper really helps you understand and work within secular culture from a biblical worldview, which is a big part of my job. I’m able to stand firm in my faith while navigating it in the public sphere,” she said.



## Save the Date: Monday, August 28, 2023

Join us on Monday, August 28, 2023, for a beautiful day of golf and fellowship at the Ravines Golf Club as 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 often return home to serve Christ’s church around the world. Your participation through play, sponsorship or donations will help Kuyper equip students to make an international impact in the world for Christ. [Go to \*kuyper.edu/golf\* for complete details.](https://kuyper.edu/golf)

### Events

#### Commencement

April 28 | Kuyper College

#### Kuyper College International Golf Scramble

August 28 | The Ravines

#### Kuyper College Scholarship Dinner

October 24



To refer a student, scan the QR Code.

### Refer a Student

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

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](mailto:alumni@kuyper.edu) with your contact information or the most recent news about you.



>>GEURINK from Page 1

When World War II broke out, he saw his older brother Henry drafted into the Army and wounded while serving overseas. That was more than enough to compel him to volunteer for the Army in 1943 at the age of 18 and stop the enemy who wounded his brother.

The Sunday before he left to serve his country, he was sent off with a special service. These were not uncommon at a time when more and more young men were answering their country's call, and such services would normally include for each service member a special hymn of their choice. Though "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" was often a popular choice, Geurink instead chose "To the Hills I Lift My Eyes," based on Psalm 121, with its powerful words of protection in its first verse:

*To the hills I lift my eyes;  
Whence shall help for me arise?  
From the Lord shall come my aid,  
Who the heav'n and earth has made.  
He will guide through dangers all,  
Will not suffer thee to fall,  
He who safe his people keeps,  
Slumbers not and never sleeps.*

Geurink needed that protection just two months after arriving at his battlefield assignment in Italy in March 1944 when he was wounded just as his brother had been. An 88-millimeter shell exploded near him, sending shrapnel into his leg from the knee to the hip. And that horrific injury caused him to make a battlefield covenant with God, one he first wanted to run from but then came to embrace.

He explained: "We were crossing a drainage ditch near a bridge the Germans wanted to knock out, and we got caught in the barrage. I said to God, 'If You save my life, I'll spend the rest of it in service to You.'"

### A Man Named Baker

Thanks to the efforts of the company medic—a man Geurink remembers only as Baker—the bleeding was stopped, and Geurink was stretchered out of battle to a medic station. "God used Baker to save my life," Geurink said now, almost 80 years later. "I would've been dead in probably 15 minutes if it wasn't for him."



Gordon Geurink as a young man, just prior to leaving to serve his country in Italy during World War II.

Below, Geurink today, still serving as he is able.



**"We were crossing a drainage ditch near a bridge the Germans wanted to knock out, and we got caught in the barrage. I said to God, 'If You save my life, I'll spend the rest of it in service to You.'"**

In an Allied hospital in Italy, Geurink experienced more of God's providence. "The doctor evaluating me was from Michigan too," he said. "They were going to take my leg off, but he decided to save it."

When Geurink was discharged on August 13, 1945, with a Purple Heart in hand, he returned home to Borculo, Mich., with his

promise to God still on his mind, and in September 1946, at 22, he publicly professed his faith in Christ.

Over the next 14 years, Geurink worked in auto body shops, eventually partnering with a friend to open one of their own. He also married Dee Kraker, the woman he had begun dating before leaving for the war. The

pair would go on to have three children, Allen, Phyllis and Doug, and were happily married for 65 years before her death in 2012.

When his pastor began preaching on the importance of evangelism, Geurink initially resisted the calling he felt from God. “When my pastor would start talking about evangelism, I would sort of slide down in my pew so he wouldn’t see me,” he said with a laugh.

Geurink remembered his battlefield covenant with God, however, and eventually he could no longer ignore God’s guidance. A fellow Borculo native, Rev. Dick Walters, was the president of Reformed Bible Institute (a predecessor of today’s Kuyper College), and after consulting with Rev. Walters, Gordon enrolled in RBI.

## Preparation for Service

Making the change to full-time school was no easy task, but Geurink was excited for this new adventure. “Leaving the body shop business after all those years and transitioning to the classroom was hard,” he said. “Not having attended a day of high school made it even harder.”

He was also still living in Hudsonville with his growing family, so he commuted to campus every day, often carpooling with nearby classmates. Though life at Kuyper certainly looked different during Geurink’s time as a student, he said the mission to bring God’s grace into the culture of the day was the same. “We had quite a few students like me who were preparing to do full-time ministry in chapels or churches,” Geurink recalled.

And just as work-based learning is a core component of study under the KuyperWorks program today, practical work was essential to degree programming during Geurink’s time at Kuyper too. “You got to go out, two-by-two, into the neighborhoods to do things like pass out Bibles,” he said. “We tried to go to places we thought needed it the most. It was on-the-job training.”

Preparation for future ministry also happened at Faith Church in Kalamazoo, where he and his family worshipped, and he helped with Sunday School, Vacation Bible School and morning worship.

When Geurink graduated from RBI in May 1963 as president of his class, he also left his position at Faith Church and had no idea what the future might hold for him.



Gordon Geurink, left, with the Ottawa County Sheriff to celebrate a Reach the Forgotten partnership at the Ottawa County Jail.

But God had a plan. On Geurink’s last day at Kuyper, he discovered a letter from First Jenison Christian Reformed Church in his school mailbox. “I never got mail, so I ran around showing everybody,” he said with a chuckle. The letter invited him to interview for a position as a church planter. And after a successful interview, he and First Jenison immediately began planning to plant a church in the Plainwell-Otsego area.

This began Geurink’s many years of serving Christ through full-time ministry. He pastored the Plainwell church for 10 years, until it became self-sustaining. “I’ve always thought that a church should eventually be able to stand on its own, without outside help,” he said. First Jenison then asked Geurink to start a new church in Paw Paw, and after four years there, he accepted a call to pastor Bravo Christian Reformed Church, a friendly, vibrant church with a large youth group, which he loved.

While serving at Bravo Church, Geurink saw a presentation on what was then known as Forgotten Man Ministries. Now called Reach the Forgotten Jail Ministry, it is an organization that uses the Gospel to transform the lives of incarcerated people. After the presentation, the organization’s director asked Geurink to consider working with them. After much soul searching, Geurink accepted. He reflected on this step of faith, saying: “I’d already been working in jail ministries part time over the years. I didn’t want to leave Bravo, but I couldn’t fight God’s calling off for long.”

Then, in 1980, Geurink became the first chaplain in the Ottawa County Jail, where he served until he became chaplain at the

Kalamazoo County Jail in 1996. And he still regularly works with Reach the Forgotten, though his responsibilities now as a 98-year-old look a bit different than they once did.

In a profile of Geurink in the Reach the Forgotten newsletter, Bill Cariano, the organization’s director emeritus, said simply: “I believe certain people cross your life as angels. The connection simply can’t be explained in words alone. It is more than a huge blessing. That is the feeling always experienced after crossing paths with Chaplain Gordon.”

Such words bring a smile to Geurink’s face, though he is quick to credit the many people who have helped him along his journey and even quicker to credit God.

Indeed, though 60 years have passed since Geurink was a college student, he remains grateful for his education and believes that the time and energy invested in him by the faculty and staff helped him succeed in his later life and ministry.

“I really thank God for Kuyper College,” he said.

Geurink hasn’t forgotten the promise he made on that battlefield either and hopes to continue being of service to the God who has always been with him. “I don’t know why God is keeping me on this Earth all these years, but it’s ok with me,” he said. “I still ask Him to guide my life. I don’t know how it’s all going to end up, but it’ll be ok. Lots of things happen in life, but you’ve got to count your blessings. It’s all God.”



# First Responders Enjoy Beautiful Buffet

For staff members Ray Thomas and Jeff Bettig, a passion for serving first responders has led to a campus-wide tradition that this past Christmas saw 75 police officers, fire fighters, emergency medical technicians and more enjoy a beautiful buffet meal with the Kuyper community.



**Ray Thomas**

Including these important members of the community in both Thanksgiving and Christmas buffets has become something of a tradition for the College. “A lot of first responders have to work on the holidays, so we want to give them a day where they can relax and have a good meal,” said Thomas, director of campus operations.



**Jeff Bettig**

Bettig, Kuyper’s food service director and chef, began the practice of inviting first responders to his Christmas and Thanksgiving buffets several years ago, and when

Thomas came to Kuyper, he partnered with Bettig to expand the program. “We both have a passion for serving our first responders and thanking them for what they do. A lot of times they don’t get the thanks they deserve,” Bettig added.

Though there were fewer than 10 attendees the first year, word of mouth advertising has led to increasingly burgeoning numbers.

“Every year, I’m getting more and more emails and making more and more contacts,” Thomas said.

He added with a smile: “The word is spreading that Chef Jeff makes a really good meal.”

Kuyper’s relationship with area first responders extends beyond the holiday meals. Local police and fire departments, as well as ambulance services, often use the College’s campus to conduct trainings. They also work with Kuyper Campus Safety officers, educating them on topics such as fire safety and first aid. Thomas said, “We’re able to help each other. It’s really a win-win situation for all of us.”

Hosting first responders at the holiday buffets provides an opportunity to give back to the community.

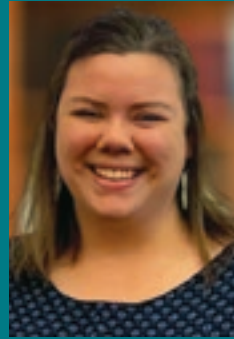
“We encourage the students, faculty and staff to sit and talk with them,” said Thomas. “We do everything we can to help them and provide for them. We walk around and thank them all. A lot of times, they’re the ones that people forget about.”

## In My Words

### GOD BROUGHT ME HERE

My story has taken more twists and turns than I had expected, but God has always been ahead of me preparing the way. Last year around this time, my career took an unexpected turn, and I found myself working at Kuyper College.

A friend told me about an opening in Student Development and how they thought I would be a good fit for the position. I was considering it, but I also was hesitant about the changes it could bring. Little did I know that just a week after hearing about the position, I would unexpectedly lose my job.



**Alyssa Patton**

Coordinator of  
Student Development

Not having many options, I decided to apply for the position, and I got it. God used the closing of one chapter of my life to usher me into a new one. Once I was here, I soon began to see how God was calling me to serve at Kuyper for this season of life.

Being an alum of Kuyper, there were certainly times where it felt like a 360 to be back on campus.

I knew Kuyper from when I was a student, but what was Kuyper like now? I remembered the staff members who used to be in the Student Development Office and how I sought them out for advice. I learned so much from them and the faculty here.

Now I seek daily to live out Christ as I saw in them, and now I am the one encouraging, praying for, crying with and giving advice to the students who walk through my door. Some days are harder than others, but I am always encouraged in seeing how God is preparing and equipping His servants to fulfill His calling on their lives.

The more time I take to reflect on my past and present experience at Kuyper, the more I realize it is the people who make Kuyper. Each class experience is unique to them and makes their college experience what it is. While talking to students, faculty and staff about how they ended up at Kuyper, there is this constant echo of “God brought me here.” God has called me to serve, learn and grow with the Kuyper community during this season. And I am excited to see the students, faculty and staff that He will call to Kuyper in the seasons to come.

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

# Newly Created Dr. Dick and Mrs. Thea Van Halsema Legacy Society

For many with long-term connections to Kuyper College, the names Dick and Thea Van Halsema need no introduction. Both left their marks (during its time as Reformed Bible Institute and Reformed Bible College) in many ways.

Such impact now is being honored at Kuyper with the recently created Dr. Dick and Mrs. Thea Van Halsema Legacy Society.

It is intended to help those who wish to support the College financially by including it in their will, naming the College as a beneficiary of their retirement assets or life insurance policy or making a gift that can provide the donor, their spouse and their loved ones with income for life.

The new Society was formally announced and celebrated at the College's April 17 Spring Gala.

Kuyper President Patricia Harris said the decision to honor the Van Halsemas through a Society that can support the College in so many ways is something they would have appreciated.



## Van Halsema Legacy Society

for  
KUYPER COLLEGE

“The legacy of Dr. and Mrs. Van Halsema is their influence on so many college students, like my husband and me, to engage in God’s missional work all around the world,” she said. “We learned to ‘walk by faith and not by sight,’ a theme penned in one of Dr. Van’s hymns and demonstrated through their lives of service to God and others.”

Ken Capisciolto, Kuyper’s vice president for college advancement, agreed.

“Their legacy on our campus is immense,” he noted. “Dick and Thea were partners in life and in mission as they led first Reformed Bible Institute and then Reformed Bible College from 1966 to 1987. During these years they led the development of many innovative



academic and evangelism-focused programs and helped shape the place now known as Kuyper College.”

Capisciolto added that legacy donations will benefit students, and many members of the Kuyper community, as donor’s direct their legacy gifts to be used for scholarships, endowment, special projects on campus and the annual operating fund.

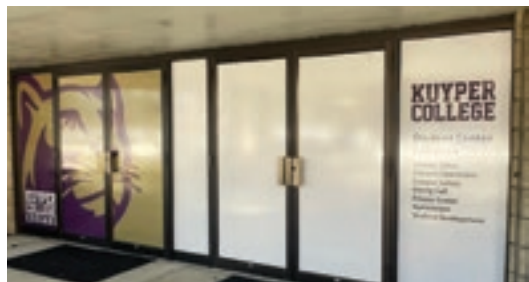
Kuyper leadership is already looking forward to a new annual luncheon for Society members where legacy donors will be celebrated and recognized. The luncheons will include an update on life at Kuyper, speakers and more.

*For more on this story, see [kuyper.edu/news](https://kuyper.edu/news)*

## Athletics Update

Kuyper College student-athletes will have the chance to compete for national championships already in the 2023-24 academic year thanks to the College’s recent acceptance into the National Christian College Athletic Association (NCCAA).

For Kuyper athletic director and men’s basketball coach Gary Bailey, getting word about NCCAA membership was the best way to start what he believes will be an amazing year for the College.



New athletics-inspired door decor for the Student Center. Go Cougars!

collegiate athletics that I would rather be involved with. Having the ability to mentor student-athletes for Christ while coaching will always be the most important thing I do in my profession.”

“I have been associated with the NCCAA for almost 20 years,” he said. “There is no other level of

Kuyper will compete for national championships in nine NCCAA sports:

- Men’s cross country
- Women’s cross country
- Women’s volleyball
- Men’s basketball
- Women’s basketball
- Men’s indoor and outdoor track and field
- Women’s indoor and outdoor track and field

In announcing the formation of the Kuyper Athletic Department last fall, Kuyper President Dr. Patricia Harris noted that it was intentional that the department would operate under the oversight of the Kuyper Academic Office with Bailey reporting to Dr. Tim Detwiler, Kuyper’s academic dean.

“This reporting structure provides a powerful organizational message about the ways in which academics and athletics together will provide a holistic educational experience for our student-athletes,” she said.

Bailey said he is 100 percent on board with that philosophy and that he is eager to see Kuyper students excel in the classroom and in competition. A former athletic director and men’s basketball coach at Grace Christian University, he led his teams to 15 NCCAA post-season berths in Division II, including six national championships.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

## STUDENTS TO WATCH

### Isaac de la Rosa

Isaac de la Rosa is entering the homestretch of his Kuyper career—on track to graduate at the conclusion of the fall 2023 semester—and he can't wait for what is next.

"Kuyper has been a breath of fresh air," he said. "Kuyper College gave me a voice. And Kuyper has fully lived up to my expectations with an amazing group of professors who are passionate about bringing Jesus into our culture."

As a senior in 2018 at South Haven High School, Isaac admitted he wasn't sure about what might be next in his educational journey. But, after taking a gap year, he said the good things he kept hearing about the college 65 miles to his north could not be ignored.

"So many church leaders in West Michigan were what influenced my decision to enroll at Kuyper," he recalled. Those leaders, he added, did not steer him wrong.

"During my time at Kuyper, I consider myself fortunate to have had professors who genuinely care about their students and the material they are presenting. These professors have brought passion and authenticity to the classroom. I describe Kuyper as a community that lives like a huge family that is focused on helping each other."

Isaac has also appreciated his work experiences as a Kuyper student, including serving as a worship leader at the College for the past couple of years. Although he said juggling studies and jobs can sometimes be difficult, it's also rewarding.

He added: "Thankfully, it has been pretty easy to apply what we have learned in the classroom to our internships and our areas of ministry because of our education at Kuyper."

Though he was raised in the church and a Christian family, Isaac said his personal journey with God started in high school.

"It was a wake-up call," he said, "and it has been a beautiful journey. Ever since I began my studies and got active in ministry, God has given me things to say and circumstances in which to share His good news. Right now, I am just on the road with God and ready to see how He wants me to serve in His kingdom."



CLASS **2023**  
HOME **South Haven, Mich.**  
MAJOR **Ministry Leadership**