

KUYPER

College News

Celebrating 85 Years A Publication for Alumni & Friends



When God Takes Hold OF YOUR Heart

Kristin, Mazy Grace
and Dan Sterk

MY STORY

KRISTIN STERK

When Kuyper graduate Kristin Sterk was young, she had her life all planned out.

“I loved the sport of basketball so much. I was really quite obsessed with it, so much so that I thought I was going to be the first woman to play in the NBA,” the 2006 Kuyper graduate said with a laugh.

But then, a routine sports physical during her junior year at Unity Christian High School forced a change in the game, one that eventually led her to Kuyper.

Sterk was no stranger to this kind of medical checkup, having played basketball since middle school. This

particular visit, however, revealed a heart murmur, which she says didn’t worry her initially.

“It’s not a super uncommon thing to find, but my doctor wanted me to go get it checked out just to be safe, so he sent me to a specialist,” she recalled.

The specialist discovered that her heart murmur was caused by an extremely rare congenital condition called Anomalous Left Coronary Artery from the Pulmonary Artery (ALCAPA), which

>> See **STERK**, Page 4

Inside this Issue

PAGE

02

It’s Time to Celebrate

Kuyper turns 85. Thanks be to God!

PAGE

03

Work Colleges Grant

The funded project is called “Faith, Work & Learning: Kuyper College Faculty Collaborative Inquiry.”

PAGE

06

Welcoming New Chief Advancement Officer

Jim Steenberg is the new chief advancement officer for Kuyper College.

PAGE

07

Kuyper Welcomes New Board Members

The Kuyper Board of Trustees has four new members—Dan Ackerman, Renee Lee, Jim Peterson and Jeff Terpstra.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION 
[KUYPER.EDU](https://www.kuyper.edu)

It's Time to Celebrate!

With gratitude to God, the Kuyper College community is celebrating 85 years of preparing women and men for purposeful lives of learning, work and service within every square inch of Christ's church and His world.

I've been reflecting on all that we have to celebrate, and here's my list. I'm celebrating:

Our Mission

It's been re-articulated over the years, but our intent stands firm. *As a community of biblical higher education, Kuyper College forms lifelong learners for purposeful lives of work and service to God and neighbor.*

Our Identity

We are an accredited Bible college within the Reformed faith tradition and, recently, a federally recognized Work College, providing a deep Bible and theology foundation and relevant, practical programs.

Our Values

Community is real and deep at Kuyper. People matter. Learning, work and service matter. And, most of all, our end goal of education matters: to live faithfully for Jesus Christ in God's good world.

Our Alumni

4,500+ women and men have served or are serving in North America and around the world in churches, para-church ministries, educational institutions, social work areas, business areas and much more. Faithful lives serving God's kingdom for God's glory!

Our Employees and Board Members

What an extraordinary list of dedicated, competent and faith-filled faculty, staff, presidents and board members!

You

I'm celebrating all of you who continue to generously support us through your prayers, encouragement and gifts!

My list could go on and on, especially highlighting the individual stories of God's faithfulness and the powerful impact of an education that is rooted in God's Word. I invite you to read about those featured in this issue who share their own personal expressions of gratitude for our college community.



And I'd love to hear from you. In this 85th anniversary year, what are you celebrating about Kuyper College? Feel free to drop me an email at OfficeofthePresident@kuyper.edu.

Finally, celebrate with us at our Spring Gala on Monday, April 15, at Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park! Connect with old friends, invite new friends, become a sponsor, share stories and join with us in giving thanks to God for these past 85 years!

Thanks be to God for the legacy of Reformed Bible Institute, Reformed Bible College and Kuyper College!

Grateful to serve,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Patti". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional but personal style.

Dr. Patricia R. Harris
President

Empower Our Students to Lead Lives of Faithful Service

At Kuyper, work is about more than just fulfilling one's own interests. It is about honoring God and caring for others.

This service-minded attitude runs counter to our culture, yet it can be found in the Kuyper community. From greeting guests at events to sweeping leaves with a smile, students approach all tasks as an opportunity to follow Christ's example and give back. With your help, we

can empower students as they begin to change the culture of work and embark on a life of service.

As Kuyper approaches its 85th anniversary celebration, we invite you to support our students by making a gift to the Kuyper College Annual Fund. To make a gift, please visit Kuyper.edu/giving or call the Advancement Office at 877.229.0940.

Kuyper Earns Work Colleges Grant

A campus-wide project called “Faith, Work & Learning: Kuyper College Faculty Collaborative Inquiry” will be supported by a grant from the Work Colleges Consortium, a group of nine liberal arts colleges promoting the



Dr. Tim Howerzyl

purposeful integration of work-learning-service while helping to reduce the cost of education.

The grant application process was led by Dr. Tim Howerzyl,

assistant professor of theological studies and director of Kuyper’s graduate programs.

He said he can’t wait to bring faculty, staff and students together on something foundational to the College.

“We became a federally recognized Work College in the summer of 2021,” he said. “Both prior to and subsequent to that time, we’ve been considering what it means for us to integrate work and an understanding of work into our life as a college as well as in the student learning experience.”

Kuyper President Dr. Patricia Harris was equally enthusiastic about the grant and what it will mean for the College.

“I am so grateful,” she said. “This grant allows us to fulfill an initiative

in our strategic plan of developing and deepening the learning, work and service opportunities for students through the implementation of a theology of work within our academic curriculum. I look forward to the outcomes of this work for it represents the dedication and excellence of our faculty and will serve all of us well as we live out our motto of *Ora et Labora*, or pray and work.”

“We expect that the research and conversations that are part of this project will bear real and meaningful fruit in the life of Kuyper.”

Howerzyl said he anticipates that the project will lead to a deepening understanding of work and will strengthen the connections between work and the learning of Kuyper students within their experience at the College. He also believes that the upcoming campus-wide project will spark new ideas.

“I think it’s going to be helpful for us to wrestle with questions about work and theology, the image of God and what does it mean for us to be workers,” he said. “For example, I’m probably going to offer an elective on theology and work at some point in the future, but I haven’t developed that course yet. This project will definitely benefit me, and down the road our students, as I think about such a course.”

Each of the faculty participants will select a research topic related to an aspect of a Christian perspective on work, the theology of work, the place of work within the Christian life or specific aspects of a Christian perspective on work as it is applied to the vocational context of their teaching discipline. Topic choices will be coordinated by Howerzyl to ensure both a good variety and engagement in areas of significance for the College.

Meanwhile, Kuyper students will benefit along the way at every step of the project, Howerzyl said.

Zondervan Library Work College students will assist the faculty in the researching of specific topics, ordering materials and in cataloging the acquired materials. Other selected students will work side-by-side with Kuyper faculty in the research and writing processes as research assistants, including the opportunity to be listed as co-authors of material along with the primary faculty member.

“We expect that the research and conversations that are part of this project will bear real and meaningful fruit in the life of Kuyper as it embraces its identity as a faith-based Work College,” Howerzyl said.

**SPRING
CELEBRATION
GALA** Monday, April 15, 2024

**Kindly RSVP by
Monday, March 25, 2024**
at www.kuyper.edu/gala
or events@kuyper.edu.

*On-site childcare
will be available.*

Please join us for an evening of food and fellowship and celebrate Kuyper College’s 85th Anniversary!

>> **STERK** from Page 1

causes the left coronary artery to arise abnormally from the pulmonary artery.

Because of this, Sterk explained, the left side of her heart was only receiving deoxygenated blood, which would lead to heart failure if left untreated.

“The doctors told me I had to immediately quit all physical activity until I could have open heart surgery, and that I wouldn’t be able to play basketball anymore,” she said.

Though this experience was devastating at the time, Sterk now views it as a blessing in disguise.

She even smiled as she described it as God taking a hold of her heart, literally, and changing the course of the life she had planned for herself.

“After that, I realized basketball could no longer be the center of my life. I knew I needed to put Him there instead,” she said.



Kristin Sterk (left) and friend Stephanie (DeVries) Van Den Bogerd



The Sterk Family

Where I Was Meant to Be

Following her surgery, Sterk began thinking about how best to follow God’s guidance and live a life of service to others.

Throughout high school, she volunteered at several organizations in the Grand Rapids area, working with underprivileged children, and she knew she wanted to continue this path in some fashion.

“That’s when my Bible teacher at Unity suggested I check out Kuyper,” she recalled.

An overnight visit to campus, staying in a friend’s dorm room, immediately sealed the deal for her.

“I absolutely loved it,” she said, laughing. “I knew it was where I was meant to be.”

She initially enrolled as a youth ministry major, but after looking to her professors for guidance, she decided to switch to studying social work.

Just a few weeks after graduation, she married her husband Dan, who she met while he was a youth ministry student at Kuyper. Both still have fond memories of their time at the College, she said.

“It was the best four years of my life. We’re both so grateful for Kuyper,” Sterk recalled with a wide smile.

Kuyper News and Events

Marriages

Kristyn DeNooyer-Garcia (2019) married Pablo Garcia on Oct 14, 2023.

Abbigail (Hofstee) Ralston (2021) married Cameron Ralston in December 2023.

Births

Mónica (Morales) Xayabout (2021) and **Daniel Xayabout** (2022) welcomed their second child, Noah, on November 20, 2023.

Andrea (Ludwig) Farrell (2007) and Trevor Farrell welcomed their fourth son, Boaz Jessie, on July 14, 2023.

Brent Lamberts (2006) and Jana Lamberts welcomed their third child, Caleb Richard, on January 8, 2024. He joins big sisters Mollee and Megan at home.

Keith Williams (2020) and Stephanie Williams welcomed Enoch Alexander into this world on January 31, 2024.



Dan and Kristin during their Kuyper days.

Though the young couple longed for children, her heart was not healthy enough to sustain a pregnancy at that time.

So, with a dear friend as their surrogate, they were soon overjoyed to conceive twins. Just as quickly, however, their hopes were dashed when that pregnancy ended in miscarriage.

But God had not shut the door on parenthood forever.

Just two years later, the couple were told that Sterk's heart was miraculously healthy enough to support a pregnancy, and they welcomed their daughter Mazy Grace in March of 2015. Just days after giving birth, however, Sterk was rushed back to the hospital with heart failure. And in the years since, her life has been a rollercoaster ride of medical procedures in pursuit of a cure, including not one, but two open heart surgeries.

A Unique Ministry Unfolds

"I have been labeled as being in Stage 3 advanced heart failure and am on the brink of needing a heart transplant," she

"Looking back on all my medical issues, God has been so faithful through every step of the journey, and I know He'll continue to be faithful in the future too."

said. "And just when I thought heart failure was enough of a journey to walk through, God allowed something else," she said.

While doing blood work in preparation for yet another heart procedure last fall, her doctors discovered that her white blood cell count was abnormally high.

"A few hours later, they told me that I had leukemia," she said.

Sterk is currently awaiting a bone marrow transplant, but even as she walks through the valley of the shadow of death and disease, she has found a way to bring light to others traveling similar paths.

"I have always enjoyed writing, and after my surgeries, I felt God nudging me to share more of my story," she said.

On her blog, at kristinsterk.com, she encourages her readers to embrace the story God has given them, whatever that may be. She is also the author of the book *A Heartbeat of Grace*, a memoir of her emotional health journey.

She was quick to point out that, though she enjoys the process, she doesn't share her writing for personal gain. Rather she sees it as her own unique ministry, something her time at Kuyper helped prepare her for.

"At Kuyper, I really learned how to live out my faith in whatever profession I went into," she recalled. "That knowledge has been invaluable."

Kuyper also helped her build a rock-solid faith foundation, she noted, something she said she finds herself relying on often these days.

Anchored in Faith

"Looking back on all my medical issues, God has been so faithful through every step of the journey, and I know He'll continue to be faithful in the future too," she said.

She also finds herself relying on Dan, her husband, who she says has been a great support throughout her health challenges. In addition to supporting her physically and emotionally, he also frequently provides updates on her condition to her blog and social media.

And together, she added, the two of them return again and again to a spiritual bedrock that helps them past discouragement, no matter how difficult things become.

"I keep telling my doctors that I'm living till I'm 90," she said, laughing. "I'm just taking it step-by-step and continuing to follow God's lead."

Professional Development

Sandra Destremes (1986) received her master's degree in reading from Calvin College in 1995 and taught children how to read for 25 years. She is now retired from teaching and living in Grand Ledge, Michigan.

Dylan O'Brien Pahman (2009), a Ph.D candidate, is under contract to write a book.

Satya Maharjan (2011) graduated with a Th.M from Calvin Theological Seminary in 2022 and is now serving as a missionary in Nepal.

Kaase Boer (2012) has accepted a role at Wellspring Community Church as the Director of Care and Counseling.

Robert DeGraff (2013) started working as a Deputy Sheriff, Corrections Officer at the Kent County Sheriff's Office in Grand Rapids, MI in January 2024.

Julianna Kempema (2019) completed a Master of Divinity from Western Theological Seminary.

Welcoming New CAO

After a thorough search and interview process—and unanimous approval by the Board of Trustees—Jim Steenbergen is the new chief advancement officer for Kuyper College. He began in January 2024, replacing

Ken Capisciolto, who retired at the end of 2023.



Jim Steenbergen

“It was after prayerful consideration and a nudge from a friend, who is a supporter of Kuyper College, that I first became curious about the position,” Steenbergen said.

“I’ve always respected

it as a uniquely Christian college that prepares people for a life in ministry. And I know many people who have supported it for years!”

As a parent raising children who plan to attend college (he and his wife Vicki have three young children)—and as someone who has actively raised money to plant churches in the past—he is eager to become part of a community at Kuyper that is preparing the next generation of Christian leaders.

“I truly believe that this is the absolute best place for me at this point in my career and my life,” he said. “At Kuyper, students take Bible-based classes and develop a Christ-centered worldview. They learn to lead with humility and love toward others, and when they graduate, they enter the world prepared to lead lives of faithful service. I can’t wait to be a small part of that amazing mission.”

Steenbergen attended Grand Rapids Christian Schools, graduated from Calvin University in 2000 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and earned a Master of Public Administration with a Nonprofit Emphasis in 2003 from Grand Valley State University.

He is eager to begin to get to know Kuyper donors and alumni, he said, and excited about the team in Kuyper’s Advancement Office alongside which he will work.

In My Words

GOD KNOWS THE PLANS

When I graduated from Cornerstone University with my teaching degree in 2003, I thought that I was going to be a kindergarten teacher. However, the Lord had other plans for my life, and how I became the Director of Library Services at Kuyper College was definitely part of what He had in mind for me.

My first job in a library was at my high school in Kingston, Michigan. The library there is sort of unusual in that it is both a school library and a public library, so we got to work with our classmates and the general public.



Jamie Tiemeyer
Director of Library Services

While I enjoyed the work, I didn’t think I was going to continue on that path. I had a great uncle who was a wonderful third grade teacher, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. While I studied education, I also worked in the library. I had the experience from high school, and I ended up working as a student worker in the technical services area for four years.

Unlike the current situation in Michigan, it was very hard to get a teaching job in 2003, so I ended up doing all kinds of jobs for about a year and a half. I was a substitute teacher, a bank teller, a babysitter and a preschool aid before I learned from one of my former supervisors that there was going to be an opening for a staff position in the area where I had served previously as a student worker.

I was hired toward the end of 2004 and also received the opportunity to work toward my Master of Library and Information Science degree through Wayne State University and graduated with that degree in December 2009. I was given opportunities at Cornerstone to move into librarian positions and then eventually into overseeing the department that I had been in as a student. I never planned on any of those steps—either the advanced degree or the different positions my career path took me on.

But, God knows the plans and the steps for each of us, and in August 2023, He led me to Kuyper. I knew about Kuyper long before last summer though. I had worked with and gotten to know Michelle Norquist from Kuyper’s Zondervan Library through a consortium that Kuyper, Cornerstone and Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary have together. That consortium allows all people from all three institutions to check out any books at any of the three schools for free because of a shared library system.

When I heard that the director position at Kuyper was going to be posted, I thought I should give it a try, and I am so happy to have been hired and to be here, serving in my new capacity.

I love so much about Kuyper: the caring community, the amazing students and the focus on Christ. And what I can say is that God has taken parts of all my jobs I have done in the past to prepare me for this job. Also, as a lifelong learner, I am looking forward to what I will learn here at Kuyper College as I strive to serve both God and neighbor through my new position.

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

Kuyper Welcomes New Board Members



Dan Ackerman



Renee Lee



Jim Peterson



Jeff Terpstra

The Kuyper Board of Trustees has four new members—Dan Ackerman, Renee Lee, Jim Peterson and Jeff Terpstra—all of whom are making important contributions to the life of the College alongside their eight incumbent peers.

The role of the Board of Trustees at Kuyper is to provide governance and oversight of policies, programs and general functions of the College. The size is usually between eight and 18 members with the current 12-person roster being a pretty typical number.

The board typically meets annually in

September, March and June, and board members serve an initial first term of three years followed by two more possible three-year terms up to a total of nine years.

Kuyper President Dr. Patricia Harris said board members come from a wide variety of walks of life, including ordained ministry, nonprofits, business, higher education, social work and more.

And, she added, she is grateful for the

many ways in which the board supports the College and her own work.

“Their professional experience, skills and unique backgrounds provide the College with a variety of perspectives as we seek to fulfill our mission of forming lifelong learners for purposeful lives of work and service,” she said. “It is their commitment to steward God’s call for the institution and serve our students well that continues to move the College forward.”



[Learn more](#)

Scan for QR code for additional details on the new Kuyper Board of Trustees members.

A KuyperWorks Promotion Party

Recognizing the achievements of KuyperWorks student workers is an important part of the program, said Dean of Students and Work Curt Essenburg.

“It doesn’t matter whether you’re 9 or 99, everybody enjoys being recognized and celebrated. It feels good and makes you want to work harder,” he said.

This idea of honoring hard work and dedication was the motivation behind a recent KuyperWorks promotion party, which celebrated eight student workers who were promoted to new levels of responsibility.

KuyperWorks integrates classroom learning with the learning students experience within the workplace, whether on or off campus. It is the most visible display of Kuyper’s Work College initiative, which allows all residential students to participate in a comprehensive work-service-learning program.

And, because Kuyper is a federally recognized Work College—one of just 10 in the nation and the only one in Michigan—all students who participate in the program see their wages directly applied, tax-free, to their tuition costs. This helps make a Kuyper education much more affordable and accessible for them.

Director of Student Success Emily Perton explained that equipping students for more complex job responsibilities is a valuable piece of the KuyperWorks program.



Promoted Kuyper students.

“They’re learning to do things like supervise others, to lead meetings, to plan campus-wide events. It’s the kind of experience you don’t get in a traditional on-campus employment situation, and it’s really helpful on a resume,” she said.

And she echoed Essenburg’s sentiments, saying that hosting a promotion party for student workers is an exciting opportunity to recognize their outstanding efforts.

“We’re seeing these student workers who are going above and beyond in their jobs, and we’re able to celebrate and promote them. We’re recognizing their good work ethic,” she said, smiling.

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

STUDENTS TO WATCH

Isabella Isaacson

I was born in Chile but traveled and grew up in a number of different places, including eight years in Brazil, due to my parents being missionaries.

I went to high school in a small tourist town in South Africa, and I chose to go to Kuyper through the Christian Missionary Scholarship Foundation. Stanley and Harriet van Reken founded the nonprofit, and it now supports more than 100 missionary kids at six Christian colleges each year, one of which is Kuyper.

In the mission field, I had the opportunity to learn three different languages and experience new cultures, and I will be forever grateful to the Christian Missionary Scholarship Foundation as they played a big role in allowing me to have a better education in the United States.

"The professors are great and provide individualized education to all students, making it easy to learn and be successful in the future."

I plan to graduate from Kuyper next month (commencement is April 26), and my major is social work. After graduation, I am hoping to pursue a master's in social work.

If someone asked me about Kuyper, I would simply tell them that Kuyper College is a small Christian community, and if that

is what you are looking for, you definitely should inquire about attending. For me, Kuyper has provided an excellent education, and I am confident that it has prepared me to be in the social work field.

The professors are great and provide individualized education to all students, making it easy to learn and be successful in the future. At Kuyper you take a variety of classes, but my favorite professors are those in the social work program because they have taught me everything I know, and I believe they have set me up for success.

I also have experienced learning outside the classroom. I have been a part of the KuyperWorks program and am currently pursuing an internship at AYA Youth Collective, an organization in Grand Rapids that provides circles of support for youth facing homelessness.

It is sometimes challenging juggling work and school, but the experience has taught me time management skills that will come in handy in any future career.



CLASS **2024**
HOME **Chile, Brazil, South Africa**
MAJOR **Social Work**