

# KUYPER

College News

A Publication for Alumni & Friends



## Redemption BEHIND BARS

Assistant Resident Unit Supervisor Lane, Institutional Prison Counselor Strode, Acting Assistant Deputy Warden of Housing Addis and Senior Chaplain and Kuyper graduate Daniel Przybylski holding the sign for the 2025 event, signed by the incarcerated fathers and their children.

### MY STORY

## DANIEL PRZYBYLSKI

Many of the men who pass through the doors of Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility as inmates will not hear them open again for a long time. Inside those walls, Kuyper graduate and adjunct professor Daniel Przybylski serves as Senior Institutional Chaplain.

Though he knows this reality means some of the men he serves have been convicted of serious crimes, Przybylski takes seriously his Christian call to reflect the image of Christ to those around him.

“My prayer every day is to see the people I work with the way God sees them, as

His divine masterpiece, and I get to live that out in very practical ways here,” said Przybylski, who earned a Ministry Leadership degree from Kuyper in 2019 and a Master of Ministry in 2021.

He also completed a Master of Arts in Pastoral Theology from Kingswood

>> See **PRZYBYLSKI**, Page 4

### Inside this Issue

**PAGE 03** **Harris Announces Upcoming Retirement**  
Her tenure included nine years of service as president and 13 years in senior leadership at the College.

**PAGE 06** **In My Words**  
Emily Perton said her role at the College allows her to engage with students on a holistic level.

**PAGE 08** **Students to Watch**  
Brynne Johnson came to Kuyper expecting to play basketball and earn her degree, but said she “found so much more.”

# Peace That Passes Understanding

As I reflect on my final months serving the Kuyper College community, I had planned to share thoughts about how our students are living out our mission through their learning, work, and service. Then, after hearing one of our students deliver a chapel message on our theme verse, Matthew 6:33, I knew I should share her words, not mine, which are here for you to read.

*Most nights I listen to the news as I drive home, and 9 times out of 10, I have to sit in my driveway and collect myself before going inside. That's been especially true lately.*

*If you're like me, you hate reading the news but also do it obsessively. Every time, it breaks my heart, makes me angry, or leaves me in tears. Some days, after 30 articles, I feel too heavy to move. Of course, I could just ignore it all—scroll past, change the station, watch something light—but that leaves me feeling hollow. And honestly, I don't know how to reconcile with a world that bombs civilians, traffics children, starves nations, tears families apart, and pollutes our planet. I don't have the answers. Most days, that leaves me in tears, too.*

*When I was asked to speak in chapel about "Seeking First," I didn't know what to say that hadn't already been said. But lately I've realized that while I*

*often seek the kingdom first in what I do, I don't always seek it first in what I feel.*

*We often treat this command as a rule to follow, but it's so much more than that—it's comfort, peace, and surrender. In Matthew 6:33, we're told to seek first the kingdom of God, and right after, in verse 34, we're reminded, "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself." Philippians 4:6-7 tells us that when we bring our worries to God, His peace surpasses our human understanding.*

*So now, instead of letting the world's pain turn only into anger or despair, I try to direct these feelings toward the God who can carry them. Not a single sorrowful or bitter thought is too much for Him. I still cry when I hear the news. I still ache for the broken and long for justice. But I'm learning to hand these feelings to God and receive a peace that truly transcends understanding.*



*It might not be the news for you—it could be something closer to home. Whatever it is, when we seek God's kingdom first, not just in our actions but in our hearts, it changes everything.*

Alivia stands as a testimony to what God is doing in and through the lives of our students, as they navigate the broken world in which we live and how God is calling them, and all of us, to "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

Thanks be to God for His peace that passes understanding!

Grateful to serve,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patti".

**Dr. Patricia R. Harris**  
President

SPRING  
CELEBRATION **2026**  
*Gala*

Please join us for an evening of food and fellowship to celebrate God's faithfulness to Kuyper College.



RSVP by March 30  
at [kuyper.edu/gala](http://kuyper.edu/gala)  
or via the QR code.

# A Faithful Season of Leadership Coming to a Close

## *Board begins presidential transition as Kuyper looks ahead to the future.*

Kuyper College President Patricia R. Harris, Ed.D., has announced her intention to retire on June 30, 2026, concluding nine years of service as president and 13 years in senior leadership at the College.

In 2017, Harris became Kuyper College's fifth president after serving four years as provost. During her tenure, she guided the College through a season of mission clarity, strategic growth, and institutional strengthening, consistently grounding decision-making in Kuyper's mission to prepare students for purposeful lives of work and service to God and neighbor.

In a heartfelt statement, Harris expressed, "The mission and work of Kuyper College have shaped my life since my own college years, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve the Kuyper community over the past 13 years. It has been a true joy and privilege to work alongside dedicated faculty and staff who are committed to helping students grow in their faith and prepare for their callings within every square inch of God's world."

## **A Season of Strategic Growth and Mission Renewal**

Under Harris's leadership, Kuyper refreshed its mission and developed a comprehensive strategic plan that continues to guide the College across academics, student life, and advancement. During this time, Kuyper achieved federal recognition as a Work College, strengthening its distinctive integration of learning, work, and service.

The College also launched an intercollegiate athletics program, established new academic minors and articulation agreements, and created a Student Success Coach program to support student persistence and completion. Donor engagement increased, a legacy foundation was created, and Kuyper secured



Kuyper College President Patricia R. Harris has served the College in senior leadership roles for 13 years.

reaccreditation from the Higher Learning Commission, the Association of Biblical Higher Education, and the Commission on Social Work Education.

"These accomplishments reflect President Harris's steady leadership, collaborative spirit, and unwavering commitment to Kuyper's Christ-centered mission," said Dr. Eric Hoogstra, chair of the Kuyper College Board of Trustees.

Kuyper College Academic Dean Tim Detwiler concurred. "It has been a privilege to work with Patti over the past several years," he said. "She leads with compassion and conviction, sustaining the College's energy through relationships, curriculum, and strategic planning, while serving as a trusted representative with donors, accreditors, and partners. Her collaborative, Christ-centered leadership has shaped Kuyper in lasting ways."

## **Honoring History with Humility and Integrity**

One emblematic moment of Harris's presidency came when she led the effort to retroactively recognize Johanna Timmer as Kuyper College's first

president. Though Harris had long been recognized as the College's first female president, she advocated for historical accuracy and proper recognition of Timmer's leadership in 1939—an act colleagues say reflected her commitment to truth, humility, and honoring those who came before.

As Kuyper College prepares for the future, Harris expressed confidence in the College's continued faithfulness to its mission.

"Looking ahead, I am confident that Kuyper will continue advancing its mission by grounding students in a robust Bible and theology foundation from a Reformed perspective, deepening its Work College model through expanded partnerships and innovating with new learning opportunities," she said. "Kuyper remains committed to inspiring supporters, partners, and students to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ through education and service."

Hoogstra noted that the Kuyper College Board of Trustees has initiated the presidential transition process and will share updates as they become available.

University in 2024 and was ordained in the Wesleyan Church in 2025.

Przybylski has been in his current role for a year. Before that, he spent six years at various hospice agencies and as a staff chaplain with University of Michigan Health West in Grand Rapids. He also served as a youth pastor for two years.

### Serving Christ Through Chaplaincy in Hard Places

As senior institutional chaplain, he reports to the assistant deputy warden and oversees the spiritual care department at Bellamy Creek. This includes managing 70 volunteer religious leaders from a variety of different faiths and coordinating with the 15–20 groups who meet in the chapel, as well as counseling both inmates and staff.

He also ensures that the facility adheres to state policy and honors each person's First Amendment right to the freedom of religion.

"I really do wear a lot of hats," he said with a smile.

All Kuyper students build a solid foundation of biblical and theological knowledge, and those studying ministry leadership dive even deeper into these waters. They also spend significant time cultivating their personal gifts in order to effectively serve God and others in a variety of settings.

For Przybylski, providing spiritual and emotional support through counseling and other means is one of those gifts, though he acknowledged that doing so in a prison setting can be uniquely challenging.

**"Prison's a place where darkness really does shine quite a bit, unfortunately, but it can also be a place of renewal, where the Holy Spirit's presence can bloom."**

He said this is because inmates have even more reason than most to fear showing vulnerability. They worry it could be seen as weakness by others and potentially open them up to violence, so he works hard to foster an environment of safety and mutual respect.

"I've created a space of neutrality for all faith groups in the chapel," he noted.

Przybylski described a recent session with one of the Protestant Christian counseling groups he facilitates, where he said the Holy Spirit's activity was palpable.

"You could feel it in that room. Guys just started breaking down and sharing things. It was like the Acts 2 Church



Daniel and his wife Heidi.

coming alive right then and there," he recalled.

These moments of revival are one of the things that continue to draw Przybylski to his work, despite its difficulties and dangers, he said.

"It's just the raw emotion and truthfulness in these environments," he said. "Prison's a place where

## Kuyper News and Events

### Birth

**Krista** (2015) and Jacob Sterling, along with big brother Jude, welcomed a son, Eli Richard, on November 29, 2025.

Stay in touch. Call the Alumni Office (877.229.0941) or send us an email ([alumni@kuyper.edu](mailto:alumni@kuyper.edu)) with your latest news, updated contact information and more. We'd love to hear from you!

### Professional Development

**Dylan James O'Brien Pahman** (2009) continues to contribute to Christian scholarship and leadership. He recently published *The Kingdom of God and the Common Good: Orthodox Christian Social Thought*, now serves as president of the Cabasilas Institute, and taught a course at St. Athanasius College, where he has been invited to teach again.

darkness really does shine quite a bit, unfortunately, but it can also be a place of renewal, where the Holy Spirit's presence can bloom."

## Creating Safe Spaces for Spiritual Renewal

Central to the ministry leadership program at Kuyper is a focus on integrating in-classroom learning with real-world ministry experience, including practicums and internships—something Przybylski considers a valuable part of his professional formation.

"The intentional, relational ministry courses in particular, as well as having some hard conversations on the theology of suffering and other topics, all really helped me," he said.

Since graduating, he's also had several opportunities to take part in the other side of Kuyper's hands-on educational approach.

In 2024, he spearheaded the creation of Kuyper's Intro to Chaplaincy course, which he now teaches every other fall. He also served as a teaching assistant to Professor of Biblical Studies Dr. Dan Kroeze for two years, in addition to supervising the internships of two Kuyper students during his time as a hospice chaplain.

"I've been able to do a lot of tangible things," he said.

After graduation, ministry leadership

students are qualified to pursue master's-level ministry or theology-related programs. Kuyper's consortium with Calvin Theological Seminary and Grand Rapids Theological Seminary can also shorten their time at seminary, creating the opportunity to complete their studies at both institutions concurrently.

To become a professional chaplain, Przybylski also went through five units of Clinical Pastoral Education at various institutions and trauma centers before becoming a board-certified chaplain with the Spiritual Care Association.

## Formed by Kuyper's Hands-On Ministry Training

Whether he's counseling inmates and staff, facilitating chapel services, or coordinating with other faith leaders, Przybylski said he enjoys being able to inform, educate, and share the Gospel message, whether directly or indirectly.

"Even if someone isn't of the Christian faith, I can still be an emotional support for them, because that's what chaplaincy is," he said.

His work can be taxing at times, so he is intentional about maintaining his

own spiritual health through prayer, listening to uplifting music, reading Scripture, and going to therapy when he feels overwhelmed.

He also leans heavily on the support of his high school sweetheart and wife of 10 years, Heidi, with whom he shares three daughters, as well as the encouragement of friends and mentors.

"I feel really blessed to have such a strong support system—it truly helps with the work I do at the prison and at the hospital," he said.

When not in his role at Bellamy Creek, Przybylski might be found at UMH-West, where he still serves as an on-call

resource chaplain, heading the chaplain resource division for his denomination, or serving on the leadership team in his local church.

He said he's grateful for his education and training—of which Kuyper

College played a significant part—because they continue to help him serve faithfully in all areas of his life and work.

"I am a blessed man who is grateful to serve others," he said simply.



Daniel, his wife Heidi and their three daughters.

## Retirement

Kuyper College Athletic Director **Gary Bailey** will retire effective June 30, 2026, concluding a season of foundational growth and renewed prominence for Cougar athletics.

"Gary's leadership reflects the heart of Kuyper College: servant-minded, mission-driven, and deeply invested in students. His impact will be felt for years to come, not only through the program's achievements but through the lives he has shaped," said President Patti Harris.

Bailey joined Kuyper at a pivotal moment, guiding the reinstatement of intercollegiate athletics and the College's entry into the National Christian Collegiate Athletic Association. An NCCAA Hall of Fame coach, he brought both proven experience and a clear conviction that athletics play a vital role in the holistic formation of students—spiritually, academically, and personally.



Scan the QR code to read the full story on Gary Bailey's retirement.

## Reflection, Renewal and Trust

As we move into March and look ahead to Good Friday and Easter, I'm mindful of the ways God uses seasons—both in the church year and in



Nate Vander Stelt  
Interim Chief  
Advancement Officer

our own lives—to invite reflection, renewal, and trust. This is a time that calls us to slow down, to listen carefully, and to remember what it means to follow Christ faithfully.

That invitation aligns closely with Kuyper's theme for this academic year: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."

(Matthew 6:33) At Kuyper, this calling shapes how we prepare students not only for careers, but for lives of service, discernment, and faithfulness wherever God leads them.

Some of you may remember that my connection to Kuyper goes back a number of years. From 2000–2003, I served as Director of Enrollment Management, when the college was still known as RBC. During that time, I often asked prospective students two questions: Five years from now, where do you see yourself? And, five years from now, where do you sense God wants you to be? Those questions invited students to pause and consider God's calling alongside their own plans.

That same spirit continues to define Kuyper today. It's a privilege to return part-time to this role and to walk alongside friends and alumni through their prayers and faithful generosity. Your support, given thoughtfully and prayerfully, helps sustain a mission that remains strong more than 85 years after God first entrusted it to this community.

As Easter approaches, we give thanks for the risen Lord who goes before us. And for a community committed to seeking first His kingdom together.

## In My Words

### A COMMUNITY OF PURPOSE

My journey to Kuyper College has unfolded through meaningful relationships, timely opportunities, and a growing sense of calling.

My connection to the College began through Ready For Life, a local non-profit that fosters inclusive communities, cultivating opportunities for people with disabilities to grow, learn, achieve, and experience everything life offers. And slowly that initial connection became an invitation into a community where I have discovered not only my role but also my place.



Emily Perton  
Assistant Dean  
of Students and Work

Looking back, I can see how each step prepared me to serve students in a way that reflects Kuyper's mission and God's design for belonging.

Through Ready For Life, I saw firsthand how education, mentorship, and faith can intersect to shape lives. Those conversations helped me become familiar with Kuyper's commitment to forming students holistically — academically, spiritually, and vocationally.

Even then, early on in my understanding of Kuyper, I sensed that this place was much more than just "an institution." Indeed, I began to see that it was a community rooted in purpose. That early exposure to Kuyper planted a seed, one that would later grow into something far more personal.

When an opening emerged in the Student Success program at the College, it felt less like a coincidence and more like an answer. The opportunity aligned perfectly with my passion for walking alongside students as they navigate college life. Stepping into my current role at Kuyper allowed me to move from knowing about Kuyper to actively contributing to its mission. One of the most meaningful expressions of this has been welcoming students during New Student Orientation. Standing at the beginning of their Kuyper journey, I have the privilege of helping students feel seen, supported, and confident that they belong here.

As I began connecting with students daily, my understanding of student success deepened. It is not limited to grades or retention, but extends to the whole person. Whether supporting students in their KuyperWorks positions, celebrating academic achievements, or helping them find a healthy balance between responsibilities and rest, my role allows me to engage with students on a holistic level. Each conversation reinforces the importance of presence, encouragement, and compassion in fostering growth.

This journey is well reflected in Psalm 92:13: "Planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God." This verse captures both my experience at Kuyper and my hope for every student. Kuyper is a place where individuals are planted, supported, and nurtured so they can grow and flourish. My path to Kuyper has been one of being rooted in community and purpose, and I am grateful for the opportunity to help students take root, thrive, and discover the fullness of who they are called to be.

# Kuyper Graduate's New Book Explores Loving Our Neighbor

A new book by 2009 Kuyper graduate Dylan Pahman explores the relationship between faith and socioeconomic issues, offering an Orthodox perspective on human dignity, neighborly love, and the Christian pursuit of a flourishing society.

In *The Kingdom of God and the Common Good: Orthodox Christian Social Thought*, Pahman plumbs both the 2,000-year history of the Orthodox Church and the modern development of economics for insights into confronting a wide range of today's social and economic realities.

His hope is that the book will challenge readers to think deeply about how to navigate the world in a distinctly Christian way.

"The Gospel is about mercy. It's about God's grace. It's about God caring for us, loving us, even when we merited nothing from Him, and we need to then embody that in our communities," he said.

*The Kingdom of God and the Common Good* began as a series of essays for Fr. Daniel Greeson's Every Thought Captive blog at Ancient Faith Ministries. It also has an unexpected connection to Abraham Kuyper, namesake of Kuyper College.

## From Kuyper Translation to Orthodox Social Thought

"I was involved with a massive translation project of Kuyper's work, so I was reading a lot about Christian social thought from him and others," Pahman recalled. "That led me to wonder what my own Orthodox tradition had to say about it, which then inspired an independent study during my program at Calvin University."

That translation project, conducted in partnership with Kuyper College, took place at the beginning of his tenure at the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty, a Grand Rapids-based think tank promoting a free and virtuous

society informed by individual liberty and religious principles. He now has more than 14 years of experience there, having risen from research associate to research fellow and executive editor of the *Journal of Markets & Morality*.

And, Pahman added, that translation project ultimately launched him into making Orthodox Christian social thought the primary focus of his research.

In 2025, Pahman earned a Ph.D. in theology from St. Mary's University, Twickenham, London, based on his published work on that topic, including more than 40 academic publications on everything from Dutch Neo-Calvinism and Christian socialism at the intersections of faith, ethics and economics.

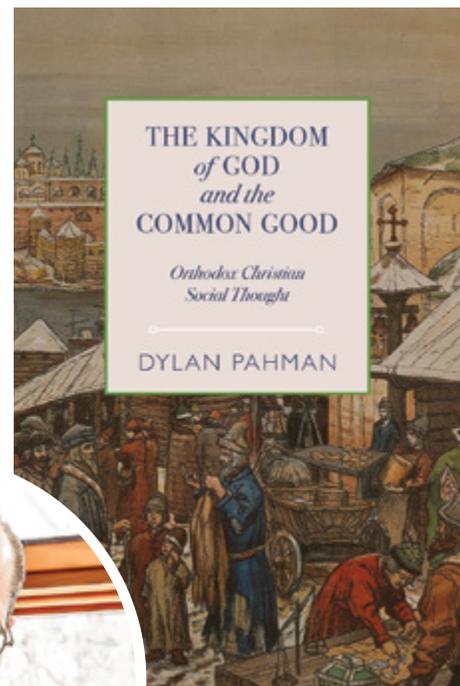
Though *The Kingdom of God and the Common Good* was written with an Orthodox audience in mind, he hopes it will also have a broad, ecumenical appeal.

"I think that, as Christians, other Christian traditions are like our spiritual ancestors, and we should know our family history, even if our own particular tradition took a different turn along the way," he said. "I really do hope it'll be a

**"I think that, as Christians, other Christian traditions are like our spiritual ancestors, and we should know our family history, even if our own particular tradition took a different turn along the way. I really do hope it'll be a resource for a wide range of denominations."**



Dylan Pahman



resource for a wide range of denominations."

He designed the book to be a practical resource, with engaging pop culture references woven throughout and discussion questions concluding each of its five sections.

## A Practical Resource for Churches and Communities

Pahman hopes *The Kingdom of God and the Common Good* will spark conversations in parishes, churches, ministries, and even businesses. To that end, his goal was not to be overly prescriptive, but to present readers with a vision of God's Kingdom rather than a specific policy platform.

"Historically, that's how Christians did it. They did just as much through their actions as through their words. That's how they literally changed the world," he said.

## STUDENTS TO WATCH

### Brynne Johnson

My name is Brynne Johnson, and I plan to graduate in the spring of 2027 with the hope of continuing my education by earning my master's degree through Kuyper's Social Work program. I graduated from Galesburg-Augusta High School in 2020 and entering college during a pandemic looked very different than I had anticipated. With everything moving online, I struggled to find my footing.

I began my college journey at Kalamazoo Valley Community College in 2020, but after sports were canceled and online classes became overwhelming, I chose to step away. In 2022, I returned to KVCC with a renewed sense of purpose and was able to continue my athletic career as well. Athletics became a pillar in my life—something grounding and steady that helped restore direction. As I wrapped up my time there in the spring of 2024, I began searching for a place where I could continue both my academic and athletic journeys.

I had an old teammate who attended Kuyper, and after conversations with the coach, I decided this was the right path for me. From the moment I arrived, I felt welcomed. People knew my name, and the environment was both genuine and comforting, even as a newcomer. Meeting with Professor (Kelli) Hoffman was especially impactful; she helped me understand the differences between social work and psychology, along with the strengths and challenges of each. That guidance was invaluable. The small class sizes also stood out to me, fostering meaningful interaction with both students and professors. With most classes held in person, it quickly became clear that Kuyper was exactly what I needed.

I came to Kuyper expecting to play basketball and earn my degree, but I found so much more. I discovered a community where I could flourish and experienced meaningful growth in my

faith and values. The professors here are unlike any others I've encountered—not only strong academic leaders, but people who genuinely care about our lives beyond the classroom. Dr. White, Professor Hoffman, and Dr. Kroeze have helped me grow in ways I didn't know were possible. Through my coursework, I've stepped outside my comfort zone, become more culturally aware, and gained a deeper understanding of how my faith informs my calling.

Alongside my studies, I work both on and off campus. I hold two KuyperWorks positions—as a residential assistant and as part of the advancement team—while also serving at a nearby restaurant and coaching a local freshman basketball team. Balancing school, work, and service makes for full days, but I've learned to appreciate every moving part. I've had the opportunity to invest more time in academics, loved ones, and new hobbies.

I grew up in Kalamazoo with my two brothers—one older and one younger. My mom, a Western Michigan University graduate, largely raised us on her own and modeled resilience and work ethic through seasons of real sacrifice. I am forever grateful for her. While life wasn't always easy, those experiences shaped who I am today.

Coming to Kuyper has given me a deeply meaningful opportunity to rebuild my relationship with God and allow His love to shape my life. After earning my master's degree, I hope to work in nonprofit organizations and, one day, start one of my own.



CLASS **2027**  
HOME **Kalamazoo**  
MAJOR **Social Work**