SERVING OTHERS
OUT OF LOVE

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A WELS nurse explains how her vocation allows her to share her faith and show love to those in need.
JESUS CALLS US to follow his example by living lives of service and putting others’ needs before our own just as he did. As God’s people, we live out this calling in many different vocations. While their work is often behind-the-scenes, nurses provide physical, emotional, and spiritual care to patients. They play a role in both preventing and easing the suffering of the people God so dearly loves.

Allison Brown, a member at Atone-ment, Milwaukee, decided she wanted to become a nurse when she was in eighth grade. “My faith played a very important role in my decision to become a nurse,” she shares. Brown thought often about the sheep and the goats Jesus talked about. He tells his people who faithfully served their neighbors, “I was sick and you looked after me... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:36,40).

Brown studied nursing at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Milwaukee, and received her degree in 2017. She says that one of the most shaping experiences of her college career was going to Lusaka, Zambia, with her nursing class. “We spent over two weeks observing medical practices and procedures in clinics and hospitals, learning the culture, and providing health education in schools and villages,” says Brown. “It made me so thankful for things that we take for granted: hospital linens, IV fluid, pain medications, privacy for patients, ease of access to healthcare, clean water, electricity, advanced medicine. The blessings are endless.”

LETTING HER LIGHT SHINE

After graduation Brown started her career at Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. She moved on to work in the Cardiovascular Operating Room (CVOR) at Aurora St. Luke’s Medical Center in Milwaukee. Each of Brown’s days looks a little different when working in the operating room. She works closely with patients, surgeons, and anesthesiologists during various heart and lung surgeries. “One of the roles I play in my department is in our holding area for patients before they are taken into the operating room. They can be in our holding area anywhere from ten minutes up to a couple of hours,” says Brown. “I love working there because it gives me time to connect with the patients and have great conversations.”

According to Brown, Christian nurses are often presented with unique opportunities to show God’s love to patients who are suffering through some of the darkest days of their lives. “Facing heart and lung surgeries puts life into perspective for a lot of patients, and I have been able to witness in discussions about faith and share passages from the Bible,” she says. Nurses also can share their faith with coworkers who may not have the peace of God’s love to help them cope with what they see on a daily basis. “I feel that having a positive, cheerful, and willing attitude sets Christian nurses apart and makes us look different to our coworkers,” Brown reflects. “And I think that our words and actions as Christians open the door for conversations about why we are different.” As believers in Jesus, nurses and godly workers across all vocations can “let [their] light shine before others, that they may see [their] good deeds and glorify [their] Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).
KEEPING AN ATTITUDE OF JOY
There are days, Brown admits, when it is very difficult to keep a positive attitude and show love to others. “It can be challenging to be a Christian nurse in a volatile field that can sometimes feel suffocating and even toxic,” she reflects. “No matter what our vocation, all of us face problems in the workplace, whether it is with coworkers, superiors, customers, patients, or all of the above. We deal with unkind words, harsh judgments, and even loneliness being in a secular workplace.” While this is true, God tells us this is to be expected. He doesn’t promise his people an easy life.

During these times Brown likes to remember 1 Peter 2:20,21: “If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” Brown thinks that, for her, the best way to witness in these difficult situations is “to be the light of Christ by having an attitude of joy and love, to show compassion to everyone I encounter, and to care for the needs of others without a second thought.”

“Without a second thought.” Nurses often face long hours in draining conditions, but they do it with this attitude. “What nurses may consider a minor task—a short conversation, the squeeze of a hand—can make a huge difference in a patient’s life,” Brown says. “It is difficult to watch people suffer, and that can end up taking an emotional toll. Nursing comes with physical and emotional sacrifices, but how humbling to know that God blesses others through our work!”

CHRISTIAN SERVICE DURING THE PANDEMIC
During her time at Wisconsin Lutheran College, Allison Brown walked past the statue of Jesus washing Peter’s feet every day. That always reminded her of the importance of being a Christian servant leader, which has never been clearer in her life than right now. “In the past few months, we have seen a lot of change,” Brown reflects. “We have seen how times of uncertainty and fear can bring out the worst or the best in people. We have been given time to re-prioritize our lives and to focus on what is most important.”

In the middle of March, many hospitals had to make staffing changes due to COVID-19. Some surgeries in the operating room had to be canceled or put on hold if they were not emergent. Because of this, many nurses were sent home or cross-trained to other areas. “I volunteered to help staff an Emergency Department overflow tent for COVID-suspected patients,” Brown says. “I chose to volunteer so that my coworkers who are older or who have spouses and children at home did not have to be in the position of bringing home germs to their loved ones.”

Volunteering to staff the triage tent was Brown’s way of putting others before herself and loving others just as God loves her. “There are Christian nurses all around the world serving others out of love even when times are uncertain,” Brown reflects. “They are holding the hand of a scared patient, spending extra time listening to a patient who has been home in isolation and needs someone to talk to, caring for the sick and the dying, and offering to work in unnerving situations so that others can go home and hug their families. Most important, they are offering the best comfort that, even while we have trouble and hardships in this life, we have true peace because Jesus has overcome this world!”

Brown returned to her job in the operating room in August. Her takeaway from her experience in the triage tent? “Never underestimate how God will use me. He has plans for all of us that will work for the good of his people, no matter how small our part may seem to us.”