

STORIES FROM THE GROUND : HEALTHCARE

'I cry out to God and ask: "When will this end?"'

Working in a hospital during a pandemic has been overwhelming at times, writes NHS nurse and Baptist church member Kit Torres. But we try to hold on to God's promises for us.



'For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favour lasts a lifetime; weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.' Psalms 30:5

This is one of the promises that I hold on to every time I start my shift as a senior qualified nurse. 'Weeping may stay for the night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.'

Due to the crisis our nation and the NHS is experiencing at this time, it is inevitable that we will experience tremendous pressure and increased workload. Before the pandemic I worked in an Elective Orthopaedic Unit where I had to be very systematic and focused with all my patient care. A patient came in for their operation and, depending on the extent of their surgery, they could be discharged from the hospital the following day or few days later.

The nurse-to-patient ratio was in an acceptable range. It was such a fulfilling job, knowing I could give the best of nursing care to my patients who were recuperating from their operations. It was a very straightforward and uncomplicated job - until the pandemic hit.

In the early days you could instantly feel the subtle chaos and panic which staff were trying to put out of sight. We were trying our very best to remain focused

in spite of the upcoming and unavoidable ordeal.

Gradually, we began to be dispatched somewhere else to help out with other wards which were understaffed. You could feel the constant fear of being sent to the unknown, away from your comfort zone.

Then the most dreaded news was announced. Our ward was going to shut completely until further notice. We were to be moved to a more acute emergency hospital to cover the Trauma Orthopaedic Unit.

Here we are overwhelmed with the immense workload. We are constantly understaffed. The nurse-to-patient ratio is beyond belief. It's a 12-hour non-stop shift, which is mentally and physically exhausting. The staff morale is extremely low.

The fear of contracting the virus slowly diverts to the fear of coming to work knowing that you will face another challenging and difficult shift.

I cry out to God and ask: "When will this end? How much longer should I endure? Should I just look for another job?"

The Lord knows our heartaches and fears. Our hopes and dreams. He is the one who knows the greater picture and he knows what's best for us. We may have a barrage of questions in mind but, as it says in Isaiah 55:8-9,

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Whenever I think of the hardships, I also think about the reasons I should be thankful and grateful.

As it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:18, *'In everything, give thanks.'*

I am extremely thankful, for while others are struggling to find a new job or to feed their families, I've kept my job - and not just a job nor a profession but a calling. I feel honoured to be called to a profession as humbling as nursing.

I know that it will not always be easy to remember the blessings we receive for our work in nursing. We will often get discouraged, sometimes because of lack of praise and appreciation, sometimes because of our own personal stressors, sometimes just because we are worn out, but I truly praise God for he keeps my life under control. I am constantly reminded of his promises. He didn't promise to wipe away my troubles but he promised that he will be with me every step of the way.

'Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.'

Deuteronomy 31:6

I am also upheld by the support and prayers of my congregation. We understand each other's difficulties and pressures, as many of us work in a hospital setting. Our church, the Filipino International Church, with the leadership of our Pastor Virgilio Pansacala, has been tirelessly providing encouragement and strengthens our faith through daily Bible study, prayer meetings, and online Sunday services.

"God didn't promise to wipe away my troubles - but he promised that he will be with me every step of the way."

I am grateful that I belong to a church that constantly feeds our spiritual thirst.

We may be facing difficulties which are overwhelming right now, but try to hold on to God's promises for us; 'we may weep for the night, but joy comes in the morning'. Let us look forward for that 'joy' in God's perfect time and, as we wait, let us rejoice for we are assured of God's love for us - a love that endures forever.

Kit Torres has worked as a nurse for the Northumbria NHS Trust for 17 years. She is a member of the Filipino International Church
