

Nursing Class of 2021 Dedication Ceremony

On February 8, 2019 a dedication ceremony was held to welcome the Class of 2021 in to the nursing program. Amanda Voss King, Bethel Nursing Class of 2015 addressed the class, sharing her experience as a student and where God has taken her in her nursing journey. Read her address to the class here.

Nursing Dedication Ceremony Keynote

Amanda Voss King

2/8/2019

Thank you Linda. I'm super honored to be back at Bethel to speak to you all today. I'm sure you're feeling a mix of excitement and nerves as you begin this journey of becoming RN's. I don't want the significance of this moment to be passed over, and would like to extend a huge congratulations for the accomplishments you've already made that got you here today. Let me tell you that Bethel University is going to make it a journey you will forever cherish.

As the weight of stress falls off your shoulders to have officially made it into the nursing program, don't get too comfortable because you'll quickly feel the weight of your back pack being filled with med-surge, pediatric & OB textbooks that I are about 15 pounds each. This brings me to my first nursing school tip, which is - save yourself the embarrassment and always carry your heavy books in hand, because your back pack will literally break open if you don't. It happened to me and I promise, you will thank me later.

In all seriousness, I'm not here to give you what I believe is the best nursing school advice, because everyone's journey is different. But I will tell you that your timing here today is perfect. For some, you may have been looking forward to this day for weeks, and for others, you may have been like me - finding out two nights before classes that you finally got accepted into the nursing program. Regardless, God's timing is never early, it's never late, and you're all here today.

Two days gave me just enough time to celebrate over ice-cream with my roommates, who I would be joining in the nursing program, and unfortunately, just enough time to finish all the required reading before classes started. Your timing as the Bethel Nursing class of 2021 is right where you're supposed to be. God has His hands over every step of your journey, has already gone before you, and He has called you to be here.

While you are all equally called to be here today, you are each uniquely gifted students. God will continue to reveal and utilize your gifts throughout nursing school, perhaps leading you down a different path than your friends or what you originally thought you'd do. And that's OK. With the help of your amazing Bethel professors, and as you advance in your career, you'll learn that the possibilities in nursing are endless - from working in a clinic, to a hospital, a pediatric unit or with adults, advancing to a nurse manager or being a school nurse - we are the body of Christ, and with so many different avenues of nursing, God will call you each to something special in

this field. I'd like to share a little bit about the unique experiences, desires, opportunities, and gifts that God has given me in my nursing journey, which all started here at Bethel.

Nursing was first put on my heart by a little boy I cared for. He was born with a condition called Schizencephaly and Septo-optic dysplasia. Now, if any of you can explain to your professors what that is, I am sure they will give you extra credit points. Although Jake was born completely physically and mentally disabled, I was drawn to his infectious laugh, patience, and complete joy he brought to all those around him. It wasn't long after getting to know Jake that I began to care for him as his personal care attendant and decided I wanted to pursue nursing.

Through my years as a nursing student, God presented me with some incredible mission opportunities that forever changed the course of where I thought my life was headed. My first trip was to Pucallpa, Peru on a medical mission with an organization by the name of Scalpel of the Cross. I spent a month in Peru, gaining experience in a variety of settings; I worked with a pediatrician in a clinic, traveled by moto-taxi and tiny airplanes to remote areas of the jungle for follow-up patients visits, deliveries, and assisted in several orthopedic surgeries.

I also had the opportunity to visit the Philippines. My work there included cervical cancer screenings, health exams and teaching sexual education classes to high schoolers. These trips were some of the toughest yet rewarding months of my life. It was in Peru where God spoke to me for the first time about His desire for me to use my nursing career as a call to lifelong ministry to serve His people.

Although I had a number of amazing experiences doing global mission work, and a variety of clinical rotations during my time at Bethel, the neonatal intensive care unit stole my heart. So, after transitioning out of Bethel and taking the NCLEX and yes- you too will pass! I began my nursing career in the Neonatal intensive care unit, and am currently working at the University of Minnesota's Masonic Children's hospital in their Level 4 NICU. I have also recently joined the nursing team at Crescent Cove, which is the first pediatric respite and hospice center in Minnesota and only the third in the United States.

While working at both Crescent Cove and in the NICU, I am constantly reminded that I cannot play God. Caring for extremely premature, sick, and highly complex children comes with days of great loss. But as nurses, we celebrate the small victories in each day with our patients. Whether that's an hour pain free, a parent holding their baby for the first time in months, or another day in remission from cancer- all of these moments are reasons to celebrate.

We are strength for our patients when they feel like they have nothing left and we help them fight for their last breath. It is these moments that remind me every day that nursing is more than just a career. It is a calling and a lifestyle. We are given the unique gift of walking alongside and humbly serving others during some of the most difficult and vulnerable times of life. We enter into an area that most people could never imagine, and although it can be tough, it forever changes us from the inside out. We learn far more from our fighting patients than we give. Even

as a NICU nurse, my tiny patients have taught me so much and have given me the desire to advocate for them in new ways by advancing my education.

I am currently back in school at Baylor University for my Doctor of Nursing practice to become a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner. Again, God has paved paths I couldn't even imagine and here I am, sooner than I would have thought, carrying my heavy books around once again, in hopes of graduating in August of 2020.

The vision and desire of going back in pursuit of my nurse practitioner degree started back in Peru, as I mentioned earlier while reading a passage in Job from the Bible. Job 33:4 says, "The Spirit of God has made me, the breath of the Almighty gives me life." From this verse came the idea and the name of "His Little Lungs." I am reminded through this verse that it is God who gives us life. He is the one breathing life into the little lungs of the babies I work with in the NICU, and we are just called to be obedient servants that provide compassion and care for those in need, and leave the rest to Him.

As the name, "His Little Lungs" continued to be put on my heart, along with my desire to make it to Africa on a mission trip one day, Baylor made that possible this past year when they opened doors for me to join a mission trip to Zambia. In Zambia, we completed health check-ups and HIV screenings at a number of orphanages and schools, but what made my heart beat most was the time I spent in the NICU at the only pediatric hospital in all of Zambia, Arthur Davidson Hospital.

During this time, I was able to propose my doctoral project to the hospital medical director, which is a modified neonatal resuscitation protocol called "helping babies breathe." My professors and I were all brought to tears when he accepted my proposal with open arms. I am so excited for my next two trips this year back to Zambia to complete my project. As I look to the future after graduating as a nurse practitioner, my husband and I's prayers are that we can build further relationships with Arthur Davidson Hospital and build "His Little Lungs" as a non-profit to educate and expand NICU care in Zambia.

As I mentioned before, the possibilities of your career in nursing are limitless! It's now your time to put in the hard work of becoming a nurse and let God lead you. The good news is, your professors here at Bethel will be with you every step of the way. Yes, they care about your grades, but more importantly they care about your souls and who you are as a person. I would truly not be who I am today, or where I am in my nursing journey, without the love and support of professors at Bethel who became mentors and life-long friends. It is a special gift you will not find at most schools.

I still remember being invited into my first clinical professor's home for dinner to talk about our fears and excitements of entering the hospital, the many hours sitting in various professors' offices talking about everything but nursing, and the way that they cared for each and every student that walked into their classrooms. When interviewing for jobs, each hospital spoke very

highly of their nurses with Bethel ties, because Bethel nurses are different. Now you get to be a part of what God is doing here and learn what it means to bring your faith into nursing.

As you begin this journey, may your compassion be modeled after Jesus as the hands and feet of Christ. My prayer is that nursing becomes more than just a degree to obtain or a future career, but a ministry and a lifelong calling in the unique area where you can best be used to love on and learn from your patients, all of which starts here at Bethel. Thanks so much for your time, I am excited to see how God uses this class of 2021.