The most difficult part about the pandemic for Angelia Wilson was being away from her children. As nurse manager for medical surgery and post-op patient care, Angelia was used to long hours and shifting schedules, but COVID-19 was different. Because of the initial unknowns connected with the virus and its spread, Angelia’s 9-year-old daughter and 11-year-old son were forced to quarantine with their aunt. “As a single mom with two school-aged children, I was scared when the pandemic started,” she says. Her sister took them into her home and set them up. “I was able to continue working where I was desperately needed, and my kids were safe. I’m indebted to my sister for life for that.” The transition was tough for her kids. “They were in remote school; basketball and gymnastics were canceled. Interaction with friends was video games.” Angelia’s children were isolated but safe.

Angelia felt nervous about seeing her children on weekends after being at the hospital all week. “We had a surge of patients come in with coronavirus,” she says. The patients’ treatment and prognosis were unpredictable, which made Angelia’s environment unstable. “I was in a ‘clean’ unit, but we took step-downs from COVID. We were self-swabbing and praying for negative results multiple times a week.” The hospital made strides to protect its nurses. “We never felt like we didn’t have what we needed. We had enough PPE to take care of patients. The hospital responded in a good way and had strict controls on who had access to PPE to ensure availability.”

With all the precautions in place, Angelia’s children wanted to know why people were still dying. Angelia had few answers but tried to explain, “This is unlike any other thing that has happened before. We have to be patient and listen to the scientists.” Before seeing her children on weekends after being in the hospital all week, Angelina created a COVID checklist. “Hot soap and water kills COVID. Scrub. Take off all the dirt. No shoes in the house. Wear your mask. Take vitamins for immunity.” There were two things she could count on: common sense and faith. “I was worried about getting infected, but even if it happened to me, I still knew God had my back.”
Angelia received a sign of reassurance early on that this dreadful moment would pass. “One day coming to work I saw a rainbow, and it was like a confirmation to me that things are going to be OK. It gave me a sense of peace that God is watching out for us. We have to stay strong and faithful to what is true and what is right.” Angelia kept attending regular church services during the pandemic. Even though the services were virtual, she would get dressed and drive to the church. “I liked the feeling of putting on my clothes and going to the building. It made things feel normal.” She tried to maintain that sense of normalcy for herself and the children. “One thing my sister did was make sure they got out. They would walk to the beach, get some freedom from devices, and not feel so restricted.” She says it’s important to maintain boundaries for safety but give children freedom. “Think about quality, not quantity - get out, watch the sunset. Have real conversations and let them express themselves. Try to be a family in the midst of all this.”

Angelia wonders about her kids and how life is going to be going forward. “Crisis reveals character. I’ve learned a lot about people during this time, and I’ve learned resilience.” She is optimistic that science and faith are working. “I think you should still plan to be great! Do whatever it is you were wanting to do even if you have to do it differently.” She continues to look for positive affirmations. “People have gone through worse, and we have more technology and knowledge in our power than ever before to survive. Do what you’ve always done to sustain yourself and look forward to the future. Embrace the future. Plan for the future and celebrate life.”