The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2020 as the “Year of the Nurse and Midwife,” in honor of the 200th birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale. You’ll see a lot of programs, social media, commemorations, and press coverage celebrating this important yearlong event. The American Nurses Association (ANA) has been developing a strategy for months now, so keep current on their plans by visiting the Year of the Nurse 2020 website (pages.nursingworld.org/yearofthenurse).

Given the wide range of nursing roles in the United States, the ANA Enterprise will promote engagement of all nurses throughout its Year of the Nurse celebrations. For example, ANA will expand National Nurses Week (traditionally celebrated from May 6 to May 12) in 2020 to a month-long celebration that expands opportunities to elevate and celebrate nursing. So, start your National Nurses Month planning now to recognize nurses’ invaluable contributions to healthcare in your organization, no matter where you practice.

I believe that the connection of this celebration to Florence Nightingale’s legacy is important and agree with the yearlong designation by WHO to support the entire global nursing community. So much of nursing’s work is described as “invisible,” so I hope that the efforts of many during 2020 will shine more light on nurses’ critical role on the healthcare team.

As I travel internationally and talk to other nurses, I find that Nightingale’s contributions are well-known, especially in England, and often inspire admiration and awe. In November 2019, I had the opportunity to make my second visit to the Florence Nightingale Museum in London. It had changed dramatically since the first time I was there, with more exhibits, an expanded souvenir store, and more testimonials from nurses from around the world. Visit the museum website (florence-nightingale.co.uk) to learn how the museum “celebrates the life and work of the world’s most famous nurse.” The museum attracts visitors from all over the world who want to learn more about Florence Nightingale and her Victorian world.

During my visit, I got a glimpse into the bicentenary celebrations planned by the museum, which will focus on the theme “Florence Nightingale: Leader, Icon, Pioneer.” I read several references that describe Nightingale as the founder of modern nursing, but she was so much more. She was a female icon in her own lifetime, a healthcare pioneer, an influential statistician, a trailblazer, and a leader. And her legacy lives on today. I didn’t have enough time to take it all in and better understand what’s known as “Florence’s London,” but I did leave with that same sense of admiration, pride, and gratification that others describe after visiting.

A yearlong commemoration of the nursing profession and birthday celebration for Florence Nightingale will be fun and meaningful. Share your thoughts, as well as your personal and organizational plans, for this worldwide event at the American Nurse Journal Facebook and Twitter. Use the hashtags #YON2020, #YearoftheNurse, #AN2020, and #american nurse2020. It’s a great time to be a nurse, and no better time to say so. 2020 is the Year of the Nurse. How will you celebrate?

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