

Nothing in my hands I bring

By [Diane Roth](#)

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I went to the hospital the other day. For some reason, I like to have a prayer book with me when I go to the hospital, even though I rarely use it. It's not that I don't pray; I always pray. I just don't use the prayer book. But, it's sort of a security blanket for me. I got used to bringing it long ago, when I was in seminary. And actually, it's not true that I *never* use it; there has been the odd occasion when I've needed to look up a psalm, or find a particular prayer. It's nice to have it in my hands, though. It seems like a small reminder of who I am, what I am called to do, sort of like wearing a clerical collar.

On a couple of occasions I have gone to the hospital in an emergency and discovered that I did not have my prayer book with me. I will confess that this always feels a little awkward, at first; it turns out that I want to have something in my hands when I visit, something I can hang onto.

The past few years, our congregation has also begun a prayer shawl ministry. We bring prayer shawls to people who are in the hospital, as a sign of the whole congregation's love and prayers for that person. I love handing the shawl over to the person, and seeing their delight in this physical thing that they can touch and see, a gift from our congregation to them. I love to have something, something to give them as well.

Of course, every once in awhile, I forget to bring a shawl. I come, just me and my prayers, alone.

"Nothing in my hands I bring/Simply to thy cross I cling."

Then I am acutely aware of my sense of inadequacy, and the promise that God gives us that God will ministry to others through us. It is not the prayer shawl, not the prayer book, not anything that I bring with me, it is the Word of God that God gives me and the treasure of God in the clay jar of my body.

"Nothing in my hands I bring/Simply to thy cross I cling."

I come empty-handed to the hospital, to the nursing home, to the places I go proclaim God's love and mercy. But I come with the Word of promise, which is Christ's presence in me, and Christ's presence in us together. And we cling to the cross together.

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