



poem

what  
they won't  
**teach  
you**

**Bex Lawton** on the bits of  
being a nurse or midwife  
that don't get taught at  
university

Dear Student Nurse,

They will teach you the basics of how to get  
ready for an admission  
How to make a bed, fold hospital corners  
To do safety checks on oxygen and suction.  
But will they teach you how to prepare  
your heart?

As they smooth the blankets with their hands  
will you hear them whisper a prayer?  
'God you are welcome in this place,  
Help me to be sensitive to you and to my  
patient,  
God, would you bless them in my care'.

As they arrive on the ward, you will of course be shown how to settle the patient in

Name bands and gown

Routine tests and swabs

And all the relevant paperwork that needs doing.

But will they skilfully phrase the question 'Do you have a faith at all?' when filling out a patient's religion?

To see if for them just to be 'English' is to be 'Christian'

Or if it means much more and how you can best support them.

You might be taught to be careful not to pray with patients

But not to be careful of downgrading silent prayers and those unseen,

For it's not the volume but the depth of your prayer that's important

You can be on your feet whilst your heart's on its knees.

What's more, Jesus taught us to pray from behind closed doors and there's plenty of those on the ward

He hears you in the sluice you know?

In the drug room

The staff room

He sees your tears when lost for words and your heart outpours.

When a patient dies

There is a procedure for preparing their body  
Bathing

Taking prints of young hands and feet.

But what next?

What protocol is there for doubting God?

For questioning his goodness

When your fledgling theology can't take the strain of grief?

There will be these gaps in your training

And I don't have all the answers

But I have made some progress and embrace his mystery.

So I'd be honoured to learn with you

Walk with you

Talk with you

If you're looking for a walking partner for your nursing journey.

And I hope that some days along the road

Our hearts would burn within us

As we're joined by a third party,

That he himself would walk beside us

Reveal more of who he is to us

And help us navigate what kind of nurses

we're meant to be

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