

Getting Ready for Your Christmas Pageant: A producer shares her notes

By Colette Shand

Christmas pageants are by definition a bit awkward—in that lovely real way that real life can be. Everyone is anxious to have it all come out just right. Accept the awkwardness and go with it. It will be fine.

The incredible strength of our small congregation in Oakville, St. Aidan's Anglican Church, is that there is really just no room for “doing it wrong.” We always get through to the other side of whatever we are doing—to that place where grace resides. There are compliments and congratulations for every honest effort. Encourage and commend everyone.

The best advice I received was from the minister's wife: “remember, it's not about

you, it's about the kids.”

Feeling fortunate to be able to help create an opportunity for the kids, and adults too, to experience some authentic drama of the healthy kind will help you manage any nervousness. As always, prepare, prepare, prepare.

Think about the differences of using narrators versus speaking roles. We eventually reached a point where each child had some words to speak. How did they do? Wonderfully. Each child spoke in a clear, bright voice and all landed their lines, more or less. Your script and musical selections are your foundation stones. Get them settled on as early as possible.

We did have one mom strategically placed up front to do a little prompting when necessary, but by and large, each actor inhabited their role and aced it. It was a great advancement in our production and it was awesome to see each actor grow into greater responsibility over the years.

Magical Moments

From my vantage point, there are some magical moments that should not be missed:

- When each actor puts on their costume and sees themselves as the character for the very first time.
- In a community, the children learn from each other and are eager to take on the next role in a subsequent year. Once, I suggested a quick and easy redesign of our donkey (a cardboard cut-out attached to a broom handle). Nine-year-old actor Mary told me firmly that the donkey would have to be just the same as



▲ Julie as an angel.



▲ Terrie as Mary and Morgan as Joseph.

before, because it was her turn this year to steer it!

- Moments of silent anticipation in a production can be exciting—like waiting for the next wise king to announce their gift.
- Things can become so comfortable in a production, that some of the action gets lost. One year, Joseph and Mary were so comfortable on stage in front of everyone singing along to “Mary Had A Baby Boy,” that they forgot to retrieve the baby Jesus doll from the bag he was in and “deliver” him. Finally, the congregation called out for Jesus and they pulled him out of the bag!

- Unofficial detours can often actually play out better than planned events. Don't sweat the small stuff.

There is so much grace in a 20-minute production. All the parts come together in the end: actors, costumes, makeup, props, rehearsals, lines, sets, processions and recessions. Enjoy every moment.

Colette Shand is a drama lover and directed the Christmas pageant for four years at St. Aidan's Anglican Church in Oakville. This article first appeared in the November 2017 edition of the newspaper Niagara Anglican.