

In many schools around the diocese this weekend marks the arrival of a period of frenetic activity. Schools will be thinking about carol services, Christingles, events with the community, charitable collections, and of course, Christmas nativities. This sits in sharp contrast to the contemplative nature of the advent season as Christians prepare for the coming of Christ both at Christmas and on the day of judgement.

However, it is possible to consider the parallels between the nativity rehearsal and reflection on Advent.

For those who have regularly been involved in school plays and nativities, there will be a familiarity with some of the key components of the preparation activities. Learning lines, singing the songs, rehearsing alone, rehearsing with others and seeking to get it right, for it to be the best it can be. As we enter Advent, each of these can be a good guide for our own reflection and activity.

Learning the lines- for those who have ever been in a play, learning the lines is a key component. We need to internalise the words so that they are second nature and can be recited even under pressure or when things go wrong. What a great exercise in developing our faith for Christmas. Learning the lines of the bible in a way that means we can recall them under pressure or when things go wrong will equip us well in our discipleship journey.

Singing the songs- spending time singing the great hymns and song of the season can again help us to internalise the truths about Christ and reflect on the awe and wonder of Immanuel, God with us.

Rehearsing alone- how much time will we spend this advent in personal reflection, prayer and bible study. Finding time can be the biggest challenge of all and yet, once found we wonder why we haven't allowed more.

Rehearsing with others- Jesus says, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20). Finding time to gather together to share, discuss, pray or read is hugely important and develops us in our fellowship with others

Seeking to get it right- Advent is a time for us to reflect on ourselves and how we might seek to 'get it right', or to refresh and restore our relationship with God.

And so, at this Advent time, consider undertaking your own nativity preparation using these activities experience a deepening of the experience of incarnation-God with Us