

## Boy and Girl Germs

This is the fifth part of an ongoing (some feel never-ending) series exploring milestones. Milestones are important points that you reach throughout life. These articles are exploring how we as a Church community can share in these important celebrations. Last time we looked at age two until the start of school, and this month we will look at Primary School.

It is in these years at Primary School that Children begin to notice things – they develop their own tastes and personality. They find out that boys are different from girls. They also learn other important skills such as the ability to read and write. Most importantly, they learn how to solve things for themselves.

Recently I was discussing with a school chaplain the differences between how worship is conducted within our Christian Schools, versus how it takes place in the average Parish. We felt that the greatest difference between the two was who was actually up front. It was noted that in our schools the children lead the worship, play the music, say the prayers, give personal testimonies, make announcements and much more. Back in our own Parish communities we seem to send them out of Church to Sunday School, give them minimal roles such as servers, and if they do read something such as a prayer, we tend to write it for them, believing they are incapable of doing so.

The point I am making is that one of the greatest milestones to recognise within this age group is that children can do things. This is an accepted fact in school and family life where children are usually given their own responsibilities. Therefore, it is a great time to start involving them in aspects of the Churches life and mission.

One fantastic way to get children involved is to include them on the roster. Make sure they are always included with an adult who is willing to walk along side them and teach them the art form in which they are participating – whether it is reading the lesson, flower arranging, the intercessions roster, cleaning or providing morning tea. It is also important to ensure that people know that a child has participated on the roster for the first time, and ensure there is plenty of encouragement.

Milestones is all about simply recognising important stages and changes in life. It's worth every Parish sitting down and thinking about positive and active ways to celebrate these stages of life. Celebrations don't always have to be in the form of a "party", they could just as simply be recognition through simple actions. Why not take ten minutes in the next week thinking about children you know in this age group. How are they growing up? Are there ways that your Parish could celebrate some of their important milestones? Are there ways that we can include them in our worshipping communities that you have never thought about before?

Next month we are jumping along to those early teenage years

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