

January 19, 2020    **'Come and See'** (*John 1:29-42*)    Rev. Jane Courtright

I returned to visit my hometown of Milford, Pennsylvania...around 1990. I knew I had to find Mrs. McKittrick! She and her family lived across the street from the home I lived in from birth until 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Mrs. McKittrick was my neighbor and she babysat my brother and I whenever my Mom worked outside the home, which Mom would do periodically if our family needed extra money.

Some of the McKittrick boys were a part of our neighborhood 'gang' (the kids we hang around with after school, during the summer and whenever we had free time!) Her son Jimmy often babysat us at night if our parents went out. Jimmy was also the one who taught me how to ride a two wheeled bicycle!

I can remember that my Mom always wanted to pay Mrs. McKittrick for babysitting us. Mrs. McKittrick refused so heartily that my Mom began hiding money between the toilet paper on the roll in the McKittrick bathroom! I loved going over the McKittrick's house. There was a drawer under a window seat in the dining room that had toys and games.

I liked to play on the stairs going to the second floor. I would jump from the first step to the floor and than move up one step and jump down again. I'd do this until either I fell or was too scared to jump from any higher. I can also remember sitting on the steps and scooting down them step by step.

But as cool as the house, the toys, her boys and the steps were, the best thing about going to Mrs. McKittrick's house was MRS. MCKITTRICK! She loved children, and as I've come to know, children sense that! She had several children, but endless love to give. I was fortunate enough to be one of the children she loved!

That day, when I approached the McKittrick house after not visiting there for more than 25 years, I was amazed at how it looked much as it had when I was a child. The same garden was on the side, the same well-played-in yard in the back. There were no children playing outside, but it was apparent that there often were! I went up the steps and knocked on the door.

Mr. and Mrs. McKittrick, grey-haired and obviously much older, both came to the curtained door. They looked the same to me as when I was little, probably because their spirits were the same. When I told them who I was, they exclaimed, "Oh, little Janie, you just have to come in! Of course, I did, and we walked through their cozy kitchen into the living room - where I could see through the windows, my childhood home across the street.

Just off their living room, I could see the steps I used to play on – now, not seeming so tall! We had the nicest visit and reminisced. I learned that both of them: Mr. and Mrs. McKittrick, were now volunteering everyday for the daycare at their church. I was NOT surprised!

Mrs. McKittrick brought me up to date on their children, now all grown just like me. I was touched and amused when Mrs. McKittrick commented, "I thought I heard that one of Phyllis' (my Mom) children became a minister." When I told her I was a minister, she looked at me and said, "Why you're too shy and young to be a minister!"

We had a priceless visit, and when I finally left in my car, I found myself reflecting on why Mrs. McKittrick had such a great rapport with children. I remembered how she always had a way of being inviting to children to children without being pushy. I've often noticed that some adults, even meaning well, try to push themselves on children. They don't allow time for the children to make up their own minds and feel comfortable with them.

Mrs. McKittrick talked to us kids like we were real people, not just kids who would someday grow up to be people! She asked us questions that were important to us: about our like and dislikes, our everyday lives, and most important, our feelings.

Some years ago, when once again, I returned to Milford, this time with my brother, I went again to the McKittrick's house. As I approached the house, I noticed that the garden was overgrown and so were the bushes leading up to the door. I knocked loudly, and after quite a while, a young man, rather disheveled, answered the door. He didn't even know the McKittrick name, and simply said an old couple used to own the house. He'd heard they died and the house was sold. He wasn't welcoming and didn't invite me to come in.

But Mrs. McKittrick's inviting attitude stayed with me. Have you had someone like her in your life? I think we could learn a lot about sharing our faith from Mrs. McKittrick. Sometimes people, with the best of intentions, become pushy with their opinions and beliefs.

They don't talk or walk with a person long enough to grow a comfortable rapport. Or maybe we get so anxious or uptight about sharing our faith that others sense our discomfort and become comfortable themselves. When people feel comfortable and accepted, they can listen and respond!

What strikes me about today's gospel reading is that Jesus' invitation to John's disciples was a simple, heartfelt, "Come and see!" Andrew's invitation to his brother Simon was much the same. Neither invitation was pushy or heavy-handed or judgmental. Mrs. McKittrick also was not pushy or heavy-handed or judgmental with us kids or with adults, come to think of it!

Her invitation came through her love and acceptance: "Come and see!"  
Did I mention that Mrs. McKittrick was a Christian, a follower of Jesus?

DIDN'T HAVE TO, DID I? Amen.

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