

**The Rev. Kathy Crary
November 30, 2008
St James Episcopal Church
Advent I**

As David mentioned last week, Happy New Church Year.

I want to talk about window glass. This is kind of like a DIY Network special on Advent. I hope it is a useful way of thinking about this short and wonderful season of our church year.

Advent seems like a mixed-up season. In our three-year cycle of readings, you get John the Baptist, some Scriptures about the end of time, instructions to keep awake and alert and warnings about what happens if you don't. That doesn't sound like something you look forward to, when the end of time happens there will be no holiday a year later to celebrate or mourn the passing of the ages.

In the midst of this is our anticipation of Christmas. This anticipation is on two levels. In the retail world the emphasis is on presents, both giving and receiving. It is about buying and selling and such. The anticipation is overwhelming for some. The smaller the child is the greater the anticipation. Music, smells, trees, candles, special foods, Advent calendars with their little teeny windows or little teeny drawers you can open. Behind these little doors or in the little drawers is a symbol of the season, and sometimes there is a little tiny gift like a holiday ornament or a bit of chocolate.

These two visions forward, one in the immediate weeks and one in the far-reaching time of God and judgment are both like windows to me.

Let's talk window glass for a minute.

There is glass that lets the light through it but it obscures the view of what is on the other side of the window. Later stories in the Gospels show the disciples trying to look through a foggy window, knowing there is light there, but not having such a clear image of who Jesus is.

Remember, there was a world before the birth of Jesus who didn't have our Christmas stories, the celebrations, the various adaptations by culture, language and religious tradition. They didn't know what was on the other side of the window. We do. And as the days get closer to December 25 on our calendar, we see the glass getting

clearer until the Advent window opens up and we see shepherds, angels and the Christmas Story.

There is another kind of glass that doesn't let much light through and it is called one-way glass. This means one side of the window lets you see what is on the other side. However, going back the other way, all you see is glass or a mirror-like reflection of yourself and the room. This is how I view the other Advent message of God's judgment and words about being watchful and ready for the last days. When we read those lessons, we are on the mirrored glass side. Most of us have not been privileged to see what God intends and what God sees on the other side of this one-way glass.

Some prophets and others report what they have seen, maybe a crack in the glass or the window lifted slightly for them, but for the rest of us, God sees and we don't.

We are promised that one day we will know all of this, the window will come out of the frame and we will see what God has seen and we will know and experience God's love completely. That is God's territory, God's windows and all in God's time. I don't have a clue how all of this will work. I am reminded during the season, however, to pay attention to the signs of the times. As a Christian, I am called to be faithful, vigilant and ready to the call of God in all its forms.

Advent is from the Latin to arrive. In the Latin it implies the journey towards an event or a place. The Spanish word for window is *ventana*.

I want to make up a new word for us this season, Adventana. It is a hybrid word and I define it as coming to the window. It isn't a door and so we can't go through. It is coming to a window to anticipate an arrival. Like families waiting for relatives and friends to arrive, we wait at the window or we keep glancing out of the window and again at the clock, anticipating an arrival.

So it is with Advent, the soon and the not yet of arrival. The Advent to Christmas journey of the next four weeks, we pretty much get that. The Advent of the return of Christ? I don't know how, when or if this is going to happen. This isn't on my side of the glass so I have to trust that God knows and it is okay that I don't know.

What happened in my head is a new word for the season. I want to put ADVENT together with VENTANA and overlap the words to make a new word, ADVENTANA. Since I made up the word I can make up the definition. It means the act of standing on

tiptoes during the Advent season, looking through a frosty window and waiting for someone or something to arrive.

I wish for you the joy of anticipation in this season. I wish you the courage to trust that God knows what God is doing about the end of times and our part in it. I wish for you the hope and love and promise of his coming that is almost here and yet here already. Be watchful, be awake, be aware to all those Adventana opportunities to see this season and your Savior through a whole new window.