**The Rt Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson, Bishop of Hull, reflects on Luke 2.22-40 for the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Sunday 2nd February.**

This Sunday, we celebrate the presentation of Jesus in the temple, and the Gospel of Luke that we have for this time is full of so much richness for us. We have the wisdom and grace of Anna, who has long, long prayed in faithfulness and service to God awaiting the promise. And Simeon, whose beautiful song we sing in our evening prayers, ‘Now let your servant depart in peace’. This older generation that welcomes this very fragile, on one hand, young family, a family of poverty, a family who don't have the gift of riches, but the gift that illustrates that they are of humbleness, that with them is the Christ.

One of the traditions in our Church for the presentation of Jesus in the temple is the celebration of Candlemas, and that may have been part of your experience, or you may never have heard of that. We have a really and broad church, so you may not have heard of that necessarily. But Candlemas is that time when there are special prayers and blessings for all the candles that we use throughout the year in our churches, and it's that time when we recognise Jesus, the light of the world, coming into the temple.

Now, one of the ways I've adapted that tradition for myself, and we as a family did when we lived in community in our home, was that it would be a time each year, which was the beginning of the year in the Southern Hemisphere, the beginning of our academic year and our student year, where we would bring the candles together that we would then use in our homes for our morning and evening prayers. As families, we would gather around little altars that we would make in our own homes, our little coffee tables, little chapel spaces that we created, and we would light the candles in the morning and in the evening, as we said our rhythm of prayer together.

And that tradition I've kept with me now, and I thought I would show you the first candle that I found for Candlemas this year, a little gift, in the East Riding Museum in Hull. But this candle was, for me, a way of being connected here in the city where I live, a way of remembering in my home that rhythm of prayer that connects me with all the other places of prayer, our sacred churches and our very humble, ordinary homes.

But above all, it reminds me, and Candlemas, the presentation of Jesus in the temple, reminds me that now we in our own bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and that we are the body of Christ. So, these little candles that we have in our homes remind us of the extraordinary truth that we are God's body.

We are God's chosen temple. So maybe this week, maybe you find a candle for yourself, for the very humble place in your own home that you can light and remind yourself of your connection to an incredible global family of faith that we have, not only within our Anglican Communion, but our presentation of Jesus in the temple follows so soon after our time of prayer for Christian unity. We are the body of Christ. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit. In humble and simple ways, may we remember that with thanksgiving and with dignity and with honour. Amen.