Dear Friends,

In my study I have a small, very pretty box or rather tin, in which I keep my most precious memories. The tin itself is a memory of a Christmas present, I very much enjoyed eating, I can’t remember now if it contained chocolates or biscuits but I know they were delicious and the tin was so pretty I couldn’t bear to get rid of it. It is packed so full that I can barely shut the lid, but it has within it both happy and sad memories, my children’s birth bracelets, the orders of service from my parents funerals, some very special words from a close friend, a friendship bracelet, a picture of a much loved pet and various other bits and pieces that wouldn’t mean anything to anyone else but are extremely precious to me.

I’m sure many of you will have something similar up in the loft, or perhaps have your memories on display all around you at home, souvenirs from holidays in exotic, or not so exotic places; photographs placed lovingly on shelves and tables to remind you of good times and significant events, friends and those you love. Sometimes it is good just to spend some time with our memories, to remember and reflect on all that has been good in our lives, and especially having lived through this last year of enforced separation, to be thankful for the memories that have often kept us going.

The Bible is full of memories too, written down with love and care to remind us of the story of God in the lives of so many through the age; Memories of encounters with God in the Old Testament, and with Jesus in the Gospels, memories of friends made as the new followers of ‘The Way of Jesus’ began to grow in number with the spread of the early Church. Memories of the difference encountering God had made to their lives. When St Paul was separated from the people of the newly planted Church in Philippi, he wrote to them and spoke with deep affection in his letters to them:

*‘I thank my God every time I remember you.’*

*Philippians 1:3*

Of course, the memories we have made during this last year may not all be good ones. We may have had more time on our hands than we were comfortable with and some have found life challenging and lonely with just their memories for company. Inevitably, there will be others known to us living in care settings with dementia who have lost precious time with loved ones and who have suffered irreversible memory loss over the course of the pandemic. Connections lost that can never be retrieved – and there is great sadness in that which should be acknowledged. But there will be good memories as well. Personally I will always remember the birth of my 4th Grandchild during the first lockdown, eating some wonderful take away meals as restaurants and café’s thought creatively about how they could enable their business to continue, the first haircut after each lockdown, being able to go swimming again and conducting a very small but special wedding service for a couple last year.

As I write this letter we have just entered into step 3 of the Government’s road map, but the news of the Indian variant has put a slight dampener on that and we are being urged to be extremely cautious. Life still seems very uncertain as we wonder if step 4 of lifting restrictions will be able to go ahead or not, but the current easing of restrictions does give us the opportunity to meet up with people again and the opportunity to make new memories, lasting ones that we can hopefully look back on in the future with great gladness and say with confidence, along with St Paul, ‘I thank my God every time I remember you’.

With my love and prayers and hopes that you will have a good summer making wonderful new memories.

Lynn