



25 Main Street, P.O. Box 61, Grand Bend, Ontario N0M 1T0 \* (519) 238-2402  
[huronshoresunitedchurch@gmail.com](mailto:huronshoresunitedchurch@gmail.com) \* [www.huronshoresunitedchurch.com](http://www.huronshoresunitedchurch.com)

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## **Motivations**

"My help comes from God, the maker of heaven and earth." Psalm 121:1

Dear Ones,

I am continuing to hear from you how much these letters mean to you each day. One person wrote that it was a moment of light in the midst of much darkness. Know as you read each letter, that many are reading it with you – that through this simple means, we are connected one to another, just as the early church was through the letters of Paul. The Church knows how to persevere and be faithful!

One person wrote to me and asked for a reflection on impulsivity – in this case, eating too much in a time of stress. But it could just as easily be bingeing on screen time, or alcohol, chocolate or even exercise. Whatever that thing is which is your guilty little pleasure – that thing you do as a 'reward' for being good, or to soothe emotional turmoil, like anger, loneliness or fear. Don't be too hard on yourself – we all have something! Even Kate.

Coincidentally, last night I was reading Joseph Goldstein's book *Mindfulness: A Practical Guide to Awakening*. He was talking about the importance of being aware of our motivations – the reason *why* we do something.

That made me stop and think: what is my motivation when I engage in this behavior that really is destructive to my well-being? Don't get me wrong – I don't think we all have to be Puritans, staying away from all the pleasures in life. But anything which gives pleasure, if indulged in to excess, crosses a line and becomes destructive. A little food is good for us. Too much is not.

When I look into my own heart I find that there is a "story" attached to my indulgence. It goes something like this: "I deserve this. This is a hard time. Who knows if I will get through this. This makes me feel good...." You probably have a story pretty similar to that one, I imagine.

But that is fear talking. Fear moves us from our calm, rational self into our childish toddler self. Fear moves us from "I can exercise self-control" to "I want it now!" (*Insert stamp of foot here*). It is important to notice when fear is our motivating emotion, because it often pushes us toward poor choices.

"How on earth do I do that?" I can hear you asking me! You have already begun – just by reading this far, and thinking this through. In a calm and quiet moment, you can recall the last time you indulged in something. Re-live it in your mind. What is the story that came with it? You might want to write it down. So that the next time that story arrives, the next time the fear speaks louder than your rational mind, you can notice – Aha! I see it!

Already you have broken its hold on you a tiny bit. The moment you see it, "Aha!" you have a little bit of awareness... a little bit of choice... a little bit of freedom.

It's OK to be afraid in these days of uncertainty. But don't let the story that your fear tells you be the only story about you. You have a much more beautiful story which is equally as true:

I am a beloved child of God.

I am forgiven. I am loved. I am set free.

I am resilient and strong,

I can make healthy choices even when I am afraid.

We are not alone. We live in God's world. Thanks be to God! (The New Creed)

**Grace to you, and peace,**

Kate