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This Spring we're trying to return to a semblance of normalcy. The weather has been a bit of a roller-coaster with snow arriving on the same week the mercury nearly broke into 80. Snow-birds are once again migrating north and landing along the lakeshores with the Loons and departing Swans. We've begun physical services again. Masks and Social-Distancing notwithstanding, our numbers at the physical services are slowly growing. Twenty-five of you joined us on our opening week, then we climbed to 35, and now, this past Sunday, 50 of us gathered in the sanctuary. In addition, our numbers online indicate approximately 55 households continue to turn-in virtually. With a bit of fear and trepidation, plans are be-

ginning for the Fleazaar. In some ways it feels as though we're heading back to normalcy. At least we're trying to put the best face on everything and trying to expect better things.

We're also feeling as though we're walking on eggshells, or perhaps a better analogy is tip-toeing through a cultural and political mine-field. We're constantly on edge fearing we may wander into a heavily mined demilitarized zone and detonate one of the many political, cultural, or religious mines spread across our once peaceful northland. One week a church member told me he had no idea how a person can be a democrat and still call themselves a Christian. The same week, another told me she cannot understand republican friends calling themselves Christians supporting policies while supporting practices and policies seeming antithetical to Jesus and his teachings. I've had some telling me they're so grateful we no longer have a fascist in the White House, while others tell me the Marxists have taken control. I've had some bemoaning racial violence across the nation as a plague, others flag that 97% of the Black Lives Matter protests were completely non-violent. Some are fighting for greater voting rights while others

<i>Virtual and Live Worship</i> Weekly on Sundays on mwpc.org 9:30 am. Live Masked Service 9:30	<i>Bible Study</i> Zoom 9:15-10:30 Tuesdays Register at mwpc.org	<i>Youth FelCon Virtual Catacomb</i> Meeting Wednesdays 5:00 Register at mwpc.org
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make it a felony to give water to someone waiting hours in line to vote. As a nation and as a community, we seem poles apart. A wide DMZ lays between us. It's enough to make me not want to write about anything for fear of alienating someone. Perhaps the alienation is already a done deal and I'm dancing among the mines for nothing. And so, I shoulder my canoe, walk down the steps to the smooth lake and slip the craft into the water.

Grabbing the gunwales on either side I settle-amidship in the hull and call my dog, Jazz. She deftly leaps into her position ahead of the carrying yoke and settles down with her head resting on the gunwale. I edge my knees over into the hollow tumblehome of the canoe, settle my butt onto my heels, and tip the canoe up on edge until only two or three inches separate the gunwale from the water. Leaning the canoe up like this completely changes the shape of the canoe at the waterline. It becomes a highly rockered craft with both the bow and stern lifted from the water, and it will now respond to the most subtle of paddle motions. My position is now at the pivot-point of the canoe, and I then start a series of C-strokes while retrieving the blade underwater. The paddle is an 11 ounce carbon-fiber bent-shaft, and its thin blade slices forward like a knife as I apply a slight twist to the blade creating a corrective motion to the forward momentum of the canoe. And off I go!

I'm delighted my surgeon was spot-on when he told me I would be paddling again within three months following the total replacement of my shoulder joint. The paddling motion does not bother the shoulder at all. In fact, I can also quite easily flip the rather light canoe up onto my shoulders for portaging the craft. Now, as I begin slicing through the evening mirror of the lake, I paddle down to the mouth of the river which enters our lake about 40 yards from our home. I swing the canoe up into the current, and start paddling. The thoughts and frustrations of the day slowly seem to slip away into the eddying currents behind me and my mind turns in a more spiritual direction. As has usually been the case for me, some of my best praying takes place gliding through the water. I slide past the beaver house, and another hundred yards up-river she slaps her tail as a warning to the hitherto unseen partner. I move from the fastest current coming toward me in the center of the river, and hug the shoreline where the friction of the river bottom causes the water to slightly eddy back upstream. It's into this current I now paddle, slipping across the water and praying. It's easy to put praise to words as I paddle, and a purging of my head-space seems to begin. Each of us are probably up here for similar experiences. The writer of Colossians tells us "If we have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the position of power beside God." Maybe it's God's creative working all around us, when we actually focus upon it, that ultimately restores our souls. May it be so for you as well.

Your Pastor, Chips.

Chips

