

Good morning, I'd like to share a couple of secrets about myself ... There have been two things I have been seriously fearful of in my life, public speaking and sharks. First, the sharks, I was 11, growing up on the Connecticut coast when the movie Jaws premiered. My town somewhat resembled Amity Island and it had more than its fair share of deep, dark Atlantic water. The movie made me so fearful that I learned to avoid all watersports. I was SERIOUSLY scared of SHARKS.

Fast forward almost 40 years and I'm enduring a bumpy ride through the Pacific Ocean in a small motor boat to Kicker Rock. Located in the Galapagos Islands and hours from shore, Kicker Rock is comprised of two volcanic rock cliffs jetting out of the ocean, its narrow channel infested with hundreds of sharks. Today is snorkel day and I'm contemplating two things as we get closer to Kicker... First, they REALLY can't force me into the water right? and secondly, I read somewhere that Kicker Rock is only home to baby sharks. A comforting thought at that moment. As I muster up my courage, abandon my comfort zone and jump into the water to follow our Ecuadorian guide, I call out to him "Hey! only baby sharks here right?" To which he hollers back "Si - of course... Only baby sharks, 7-8 feet!

Happily nothing took a bite out of me that day. But truly, I'm so thankful that I found the courage to abandon the safety of that boat and leap into the water. Swimming among hundreds of sharks was amazing. I conquered my long time fear, I'll never forget that day.

Now to address my second secret – my fear of public speaking. Having spent most of professional life in sales and marketing required to make presentations and lead seminars which put me front and center on a regular basis. This is WAY outside of my comfort zone. I've felt my knees knock under tables, experienced sweating hands, dry mouth – you name it. Standing here this morning is not easy for me. I watch my son Doug play the piano in our beautiful sanctuary and I'm a bundle of nerves... and I'm not even the one playing! I'm astounded at his composure in front of an audience – truly I am.

Here's the thing.... Reaching beyond your comfort zone isn't easy. But - could it be that by doing so will help set you on the course that God has intended? In this morning's bulletin, you'll find a new brochure Ready, Set, Connect! This is an important tool to help you consider expanding your frame of reference and level of engagement in the life of this Church. Strengthening your personal connection to your church family not only feeds you as a member of this congregation but also helps insure that SMPC continues to thrive as a Christ centered community of faith.

So take a chance! And muster up your courage to be exposed to a new or different area of interest as outlined in the Connection brochure. Is reaching beyond your comfort zone to experience a new activity in the life of our church as dramatic as swimming with sharks or enduring that uncomfortable moment when all eyes are fixed on you? I certainly hope not. This is a call to take that first important step into the unfamiliar and strengthen your connection to SMPC and to God. So jump in and connect. I promise you we won't bite!

Kim Dracon