

THE DEFIANT MIDDLE

summer patio series 2023 | kick off party

Connect with the members of your group

Begin by getting to know your group – **start by sharing your name, a bit about who you are, how you are connected to St. Michael's, and why you decided to join the patio series this summer.**

Discuss the following questions (or pick the ones that resonate most!)

In the prelude, the author Kaya Oakes, resists the term "middle-aged" to describe the season of life she is in. **What phrase or words would you use to describe the season of life you are in and why?**

In much of this section, the author discusses the various expectations placed on women to be accepted or valued. **What expectations do you see placed on women today, or that experience in your life? Have you experienced change in these expectations over the course of your life?**

Oakes writes, "Today, women are still hemmed in by expectations of what we should be, but we are also coming to new understandings about age, youth, anger, mental health, the meaning of fertility, solitude, and independence. When women feel freedom to evolve beyond prescribed roles, we can experience a fecundity of the imagination, an era when we become not solely creative but created." (xiii) **When have you felt constrained by certain prescribed roles or the expectations of others? Where, when, or with whom do you feel most free?**

Oakes shares her experience of meeting the biblical Mary in contrast to an interpretation of Mary that she was raised with. (viii) She also lists some of the female religious role models that she didn't meet until adulthood. **Where you raised with any female (or gender queer) spiritual role models or leaders? Do you have any historical or current female (or gender queer) religious role models today?**

Oakes lists several religious, medieval women who defied the narrow expectations of what it meant to be a woman at that time, who were agents of change. (xi) **Who in your life (or in**

the world) do you see as an agent of change?

Close your conversations with the following prompt:

"In this season of my life, I need more _____ and less _____"

Pray for your group

God of life; the world is quick to tell us who we should be, how we should act, and in what ways we are valued. Remind us this summer through in this gift of this community, that we are first and foremost created good. Grant us courage to break free from the expectations that bind us, that we might know you, ourselves, and one another fully and wholly. Amen.

Pick your next meeting location and time

Sunday Group	Wednesday Group	Thursday Group
June 11	June 14	June 15
June 25	June 28	June 29
July 9	July 12	July 13
July 23	July 26	July 27
August 13	August 9	August 10

discussion guides are available at www.stmichaelselca.com/patioseries