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Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for being here to honor my mom, Eleanor Grace Mitchell—our Ellie.

She was born on September 3, 1958, and left us on July 14, 2025, at the age of 66. Those are the dates, the bookends—but between them is a life so full of gentle strength and steady love that it’s hard to put into words.

Ellie grew up in Portland, where her eyes first learned to find beauty in small things—a quiet street after rain, a wren on a fence, the smell of freshly turned earth. She carried that way of seeing into everything she did. She studied nursing because caring for people wasn’t just a calling for her—it was her language. In college she met her sweetheart, Daniel, and for 41 years they built a life together that showed us what devotion looks like in the everyday—shared coffee, dog-eared books, inside jokes that lasted decades.

They moved to Seattle to raise a family, and my sister Claire and I got to be the daughters of a woman who was at once fierce and tender. She spent decades as a registered nurse and later head nurse in pediatrics. She advocated for patients who didn’t have a voice, calmed worried parents at 3 a.m., and mentored younger nurses until they could carry that same light forward. If you ever saw her on a community health fair Saturday—clipboards in hand, sleeves rolled up—you know what purpose looks like when it smiles.

At home, her kindness took on a thousand humble shapes. She remembered everyone’s favorite dessert and would show up with lemon bars wrapped in wax paper, still warm, like an antidote to a hard day. She tended a rose garden with the same patience she brought to people—pruning gently, trusting that what is cared for will bloom again. On the porch, with her watercolors, she’d catch the soft blues of a winter sky. And if you were lucky enough to walk with her at

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sunrise, you learned the names of birds and the easy rhythm of a good companion.

For me, she was my closest confidant. We spoke every day. We took morning walks that became our ritual—coffee in hand, breath in the cool air, steps in sync. I will miss the way her voice steadied me—the way she could make a storm feel like weather you could walk through.

My favorite memory sits at our kitchen table, late on a school night before my finals. The house was quiet. She made tea and didn't fill the silence with advice. She just listened. When she did speak, she said the words that landed like a hand over my heart: "You are enough." I have returned to those words a thousand times. I will keep returning to them.

Ellie's faith was quiet but steadfast. She found peace in prayer, especially during Advent, when candlelight softened the edges of long nights. She didn't preach. She practiced—small mercies, patient presence, a trust that light finds us. Her favorite sayings weren't slogans; they were North Stars. "One small kind act can carry someone through a long day," she'd say. And when things felt overwhelming: "We do the next right thing, one step at a time." I hear her in those words still, and I think many of you do, too.

She loved her people deeply—her husband Daniel; her daughters, Ava and Claire; and her grandson, Noah, who unlocked a new kind of joy in her. Watching her hold Noah was like watching sunlight land on water. She became even more herself—sillier, softer, and somehow stronger all at once.

If you worked with her, you knew her quick wit, that gentle humor that could loosen a knot in your chest. If you were her patient—or a parent of one—you knew her calming presence, those steady hands that made the hardest moments feel bearable. If you were a young nurse, you knew she believed in you until you believed in yourself. And if you were family, you knew she somehow remembered your deadlines, your worries, and your favorite pie.

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We are grieving today—because love this sturdy doesn’t leave without ache. But we are also grateful. Grateful for the morning walks. For the lemon bars smudged with powdered sugar. For watercolor sunrises taped to the fridge. For the way she’d pause on the phone before hanging up, just long enough to make sure we felt seen. For the garden she kept, the birds she greeted, the candles she lit, the way she put her whole self into caring for children in hospital rooms and into holding her own children close.

What will we miss most? That reassuring voice, the calm in our storms, the way she could turn panic into a plan. We’ll miss the text that said, “Call when you can,” and the moment you realized that just hearing her breathe on the other end was enough. We’ll miss her hands—capable and kind. We’ll miss the way she noticed the overlooked and lifted them gently to the light.

But she hasn’t left us empty-handed. She leaves us her values. She leaves us her sayings that feel like instructions for living: one small kind act; the next right thing; one step at a time. She leaves us the example of a life where service was not a sacrifice but a joy, where family was not an obligation but a gift, where faith was not loud but luminous.

So let’s honor Ellie the way she taught us to live. Let’s listen more than we speak. Let’s carry a granola bar in our bag because somebody will need it. Let’s look up the name of the bird we saw on the fence and tell someone about it. Let’s call back. Let’s bake the recipe we know will make someone feel remembered. And when the road feels longer than we thought we could walk, let’s borrow her words and do the next right thing, one step at a time.

Mom, thank you for raising us in a home where tenderness was strength and humor could heal. Thank you for loving Dad so steadily for 41 years. Thank you for showing Claire and me how to be women who show up, how to find quiet faith when the night is long, and how to keep our eyes soft for the first light of morning.

We will carry you with us on every sunrise walk. We will speak your kindness

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into the world. We will make tea at the kitchen table and tell Noah stories about his grandmother who could calm a room just by entering it, who painted skies, counted birds, and believed that enough is a holy word.

Rest, Ellie. Rest in the peace you gave so freely to others. We'll take it from here—with gentle strength, with compassion, with a bit of wit, and with your voice in our hearts, reminding us that we are enough, and that love, like a well-tended rose, blooms again.

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