



RESURRECTION AND NEW LIFE

*What do you see?
Weeds or wishes?*

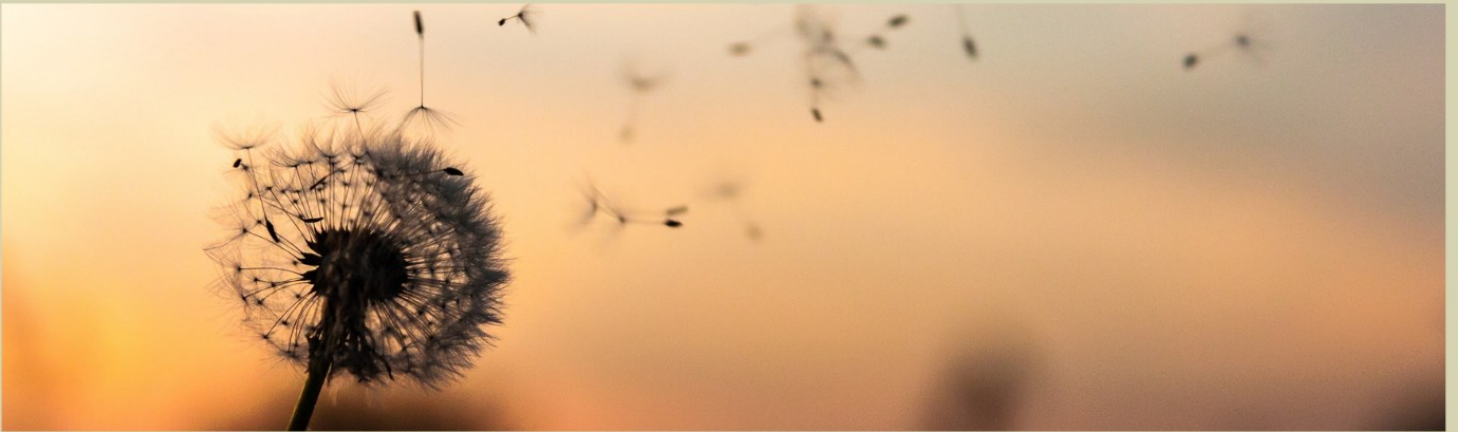
Weeds or

By Pastor Joanna Mitchell

When our kids were young, we had the most dandelions in our neighborhood. We didn't want to use pesticides that might blow into our house and affect our kids. I remember trying to dig them out with a special tool, only to almost reach the entire root and have it break at the bottom. Eventually, I just gave up. Dandelions are quite beautiful for a time. Their yellow blossoms brighten the lawn and bring new life.



However, my dandelion garden drove one of my neighbors crazy. For good reason, really—a strong wind would blow the seeds far beyond my yard and into the neighborhood. This neighbor was also a master gardener and a retired business owner of a landscaping company. Every summer, touring groups would visit his garden, while there I was on the corner, sending my dandelion seeds into the wind.



But my daughters delighted in the dandelions. I remember many vases on my kitchen counter, filled with the flowers picked by their small hands, presented with love. I did the same thing for my mom when I was a child—gifting her a sweaty fistful of dandelions. Of course, those dandelions would wilt quickly, and in our yard, they would eventually go to seed. As a child, I was quick to pick them and blow, watching the dazzling seeds dance in the wind. Yes, I was that kind of kid—and so were my children.



Wishes?

I think there's a reason Jesus tells us to have the faith of a child. It's not just about wondering or believing; it's about delighting in the world around us. Children don't see dandelions as weeds; they see them as something more beautiful. They are gifts for parents, wishes waiting to be made, and flowers that make the yard more vibrant. Their roots run deep, and instead of cursing them as adults do when striving for a pristine yard, we can rejoice that these yellow blossoms will return year after year.

New life, new hope, wishes, and weeds—this is what God does for us. God changes our perspective, opens our eyes, and allows us to see more than we ever thought possible.

The Easter story begins in a tomb, amidst despair and grief. It is here that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James encounter Jesus. At first, the disciples dismiss the women's story as an "idle tale"—a wish that seems nonsensical and easily ignored. Little did they know that this idle tale would change everything. Jesus would continue to show up in unexpected places: on empty roads, on beaches at breakfast, in the breaking of bread, and behind locked doors. Jesus came not as something they had hoped for, but as the realized promise—a seed planted in the field, impossible to contain.

Jesus' promise of new life and hope would spread slowly, as person after person shared what they had encountered. Before long, this "idle tale" would work its way from community to community, reaching far beyond anyone's expectations. New life, new hope, wishes, and weeds—this is what God does for us. God changes our perspective, opens our eyes, and allows us to see more than we ever thought possible.

It's been a long time since I picked a dandelion and blew its seeds into the world. It's probably a good thing—my neighbors wouldn't appreciate it, even now. And yet, I believe God invites us to share the Gospel in abundance. God calls us to delight with the gleeful energy of a child, to see the dandelions not as weeds, but as something beautiful—a gift to be shared, where love can spread, and hope can grow.

A Volunteer Journey

By Marie Kolar

"...give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."- Luke 6:38



When I reflect on my volunteering experiences, I often recall the numerous times I assisted at my children's elementary school for classroom celebrations, field trips, and P.T.A. events. Throughout their various activities, there were always requests for volunteers for tournaments, team parents, concession stand duties, and fundraisers. I also remember the countless hours spent carpooling my kids to Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, soccer, football, softball, baseball, basketball, wrestling, lacrosse, and choir. Carpooling was truly what I cherished the most. As the kids piled into the car, conversations began about crushes, favorite and least favorite teachers, coaches, and whether certain kids seemed to receive special treatment. I would simply sit back and drive, relishing in hearing about their achievements, struggles, heartaches, and family dynamics. Some kids would often ask, "Mom K., what do you think?" I aimed to remain neutral and positive, offering general advice to avoid stepping on another parent's toes. Once the kids got their driver's licenses, my carpooling days came to an end, and I must admit I felt a bit adrift. Although I appreciated not having to drive at all hours to drop off or pick up a child—especially with the logistics of two kids in sports and a husband who served as a sheriff's deputy—I still missed that special time spent in the car with my kids and their friends.

I explored various volunteer opportunities, including Discover Anoka, United Way, and Backing the Blue Line. However, none of these experiences sparked an emotional connection, soothed my heart, or eased my feelings of empty nest syndrome.



Then my husband and I came across Grace Lutheran Church. We enjoyed attending services, bringing our children when they were home from school, and even inviting my mom to join us. One Sunday, during the blessing of the quilts destined for Rakai, my husband turned to me and said, "Hey, I wonder if you'd be interested in that?" Intrigued, I looked into it and discovered an evening quilting group. I decided to check it out, and that was eight years ago.

Today, I still create quilt toppers for the Rakai quilting group during my crafting time at home. This fulfilling experience inspired me to take on the role of organizing communion set-up and clean-up, which I now lead. This volunteer work has allowed me to utilize my skills in sewing, quilting, organization, cleaning, and working behind the scenes. It has also given me a renewed sense of purpose as my children have grown. Now, I have something that is uniquely mine. I find joy in following in the footsteps of my beloved Aunt Millie, who embodied the essence of the cherished Lutheran church basement lady.



In January 2020, the Sunday bulletins featured an announcement for a part-time bookkeeper position. Upon first reading it, I took a moment to reflect. I contemplated it, prayed about it, and wrestled with the decision.

The following Sunday, the job listing appeared again. I delved into the job description and realized I had experience in similar roles throughout my career. I considered how this opportunity would impact my cleaning business, prayed once more, and continued to wrestle with my thoughts. That Saturday evening, I discussed the opportunity with my husband. I shared that after 12 years of cleaning homes, I felt exhausted and was ready to gradually retire from that work. His first question was, "What will you do instead of cleaning?" I mentioned the bulletin article from the previous week. He inquired, "Do you think you would enjoy it there?" since he had heard that working in a church could be exhausting. I replied that every time I volunteered or participated in church activities, it had been a wonderful experience. He then asked if the position was still available. I wasn't certain, but I figured if the article appeared in this week's bulletin, it was a sign for me to apply. And it was! I submitted my application and was hired as the bookkeeper at Grace, working 12 hours a week. Over the past five years, I have transitioned into the role of communications and volunteer coordinator, working Monday through Thursday. I have fully retired from house cleaning and cherish every moment in my position at Grace.

Why am I sharing this with you? Because I have genuinely discovered my passion, and through volunteering, I found my dream job. You will never know what you might learn about yourself, your passions, and your purpose unless you take the leap and try. Please join Grace for a celebration of all volunteers on April 6th.



**Volunteer
Celebration!**

**Sunday
April 6th
9:30am-12:00pm**

Join us in honoring the incredible Grace volunteers! Enjoy treats, recognition of our volunteers, a gratitude board, and discover various opportunities to get involved!

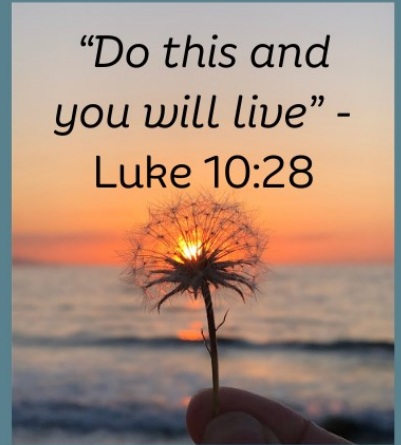
Being Alive - “Do This and You Will Live”

By Nancy Jenkins

Over five years ago I helped start the Mental Health Team at Grace because I thought that it was (and is) important for people of faith to learn about mental health and to become comfortable having conversations about mental health both within our faith community as well as outside of our church. I also have a passion for thinking and talking about concepts not covered in worship or that may seem taboo in some churches like wellness, healing, wholeness, wayfinding, and more. Recently I realized that for the past three years I have been on a journey of healing and wholeness following the unexpected loss of my mother. It was a season of intense loss and pain and also a time of intense searching for how I want to live my life.

At the beginning of Lent this year, Pastor Joanna preached on Luke 10. You may remember the text and sermon about the lawyer, the Good Samaritan, and the sisters, Mary and Martha. One of the verses that remains is Jesus' answer to the lawyer who asked him what he must do to receive eternal life. Pastor Joanna pointed out Jesus' reply wasn't about how to receive eternal life but, rather, Jesus told the lawyer in verse 28, "Do this and you will live."

*“Do this and
you will live” -
Luke 10:28*



I wonder at times, “wouldn’t it be great to have Jesus point the way and tell us what we need to do to live?” Do you ever wonder how best to live or how God wants you to live? Maybe like me, you are experiencing a hard season in life and wondering what you must do to feel alive again. This idea of being alive is a key question in the Bible and in life itself. The questions of “how should I live” and “what do I do to be alive?” lead me to discernment.



According to the dictionary, discernment means:

1. The ability to judge well;
2. (In Christian contexts) perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding.

I don't love the word discernment because it can seem too "churchy" and yet I think it is the right word to describe what is needed. How am I to live? How are we to live in this time and place?

May is national mental health awareness month. In the context of mental health and in the spirit of having a conversation that perhaps we haven't had before at church, I ask:

- What makes you feel alive?
- When do you feel energized or surprisingly full of energy?
- When or where do you feel love, acceptance, and belonging?
- What inspires you?
- What is the next right thing for you to do?

In conclusion, I want to share one of my favorite quotes which is from the 20th century author and theologian, Howard Thurman: "Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

Nancy Jenkins is the leader of the Grace Mental Health Team. She has no formal education in mental health or counseling, only life experience.



If you need immediate emotional or mental health support, or are worried about someone else, please call or text 988 or visit 988Lifeline.org to connect online with a trained specialist. If a medical emergency call 911.

Transforming Inside & Out: A Journey of Growth

By Greg Ackerson

It always amazes me how quickly time passes. Each year seems to move faster than the last. It feels like just yesterday we were enduring the bitter cold of winter, and now spring is beginning to bloom. Before we know it, summer will come and go. Time slips away so easily, and I often find myself too focused on the busyness of life—checking off tasks rather than investing in the bigger picture of who I want to become.

If you haven't heard, our Transforming Inside & Out campaign has officially wrapped up. It's hard to believe that three years have already passed since we first gathered for planning meetings and our kickoff dinners. Time moved swiftly, but this campaign was one instance where I feel like we got it right. Instead of simply focusing on what needed to be done, our church spent time praying about how God was calling us to grow.

Yes, this campaign involved raising funds, but it was never just about the money. The true goal was transformation—not just of our church building, but of our hearts, our faith, and our relationship with God.

Our goal was to raise \$1.2 million, and through God's provision and the generosity of this congregation, we received pledges of over \$1.5 million and ultimately received \$1.6 million. These numbers are incredible, but even more incredible are the stories of personal faith journeys. Throughout this campaign, people stepped out in faith, stretched beyond their comfort zones, and trusted God in new ways. Lives were changed. And that was the true mission all along.

Transforming
INSIDE + OUT



As we move forward, let's not let this transformation stop here. Just as the world around us awakens in spring—the budding trees, the blooming flowers, the fresh signs of life—let these be reminders that God is calling us to continue growing. Transformation isn't a one-time event; it's an ongoing process.

So, I invite you to take this season as an opportunity to lean into growth. Spend time in prayer. Listen for how God is calling you to stretch. Say yes to something new—whether it's signing up for a class, joining a ministry, committing to that mission trip you've been considering, or deepening your personal faith practice.

Growth doesn't happen when you're comfortable. It happens when we take bold steps, trust in God's plan, and embrace the challenges that stretch us. Whatever you do, don't let time just pass you by. Let's keep transforming—inside and out.

Transforming Inside & Out

By Tracie Russell

A long time ago in a galaxy far away. . I'm kidding, but you all get the drift. Back in October 2021 I was approached by Pastor Joanna to join a capital team that would raise funds to support the building project. I remember thinking, "why not. I've got time and am happy to help my church." How naïve I was. Not about the time, because I had that, but more: "Helping my church." I believe emphatically that this building project has helped our church. I would also say I'm living proof of that, but more about that later. I had never participated in a capital campaign let alone co-led one. What on earth were Pastor Joanna and God thinking??? I went to our initial meeting where I quickly learned all the expectations of the campaign itself and a quick turnaround timeframe. I also learned that I'd be expected to talk in front of people and meet with people to ask for their support. I left that meeting thinking, "they have really picked the wrong person!"

One thing that stood out to me at that meeting was "the why." We wanted everyone to experience spiritual transformation of their own and to witness it in others whether they financially supported the campaign or not. We discussed reaching people and asking them to join us on a generosity journey where there was the potential to experience spiritual growth and transformation. Having never participated in a capital campaign, I had no idea what that meant, but I assumed that I would be witnessing this journey in others. I didn't realize that I too would go through a long journey of my own!



Being a part of this campaign brought me closer to God. Through prayer at meetings, praying for others during this journey or praying for sufficient funds, I was praying more than ever before. I prayed for the courage to be vulnerable and to share my story with all of you. Through God, I was able to do that even though it was outside my comfort zone. I marveled at the stories of generosity and God's provision. I was amazed at your willingness to be generous with your time, talents, financial support, and prayer. I questioned myself thinking, "there is no way we will be able to fulfill this pledge!" Yet God provided and continues to provide every step of the way. I'm amazed by God. Overwhelmed by God. Humbled by God. I'm being joyously led by God. I hope the same for all of you!

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Our Transforming campaign has come to a close. Many of you extended your pledges and continue to give or are finishing up the original pledges promised. We added to our project and completed things that we thought were out of scope. I can't thank you enough for all your support! I encourage you to keep your eye on the greater journey of "Transformation." It doesn't stop with this project, and it doesn't stop when we are called home with our final breath. God has a plan, and one can only imagine the awesomeness of "Transformation in Heaven!"

I am an example of how "Transforming Inside and Out" has helped enable our church ministries. My mom passed away on January 27th. Even though my parents were not members of Grace, Pastor Joanna, the Grace Staff, the funeral ministry team, and everyone that volunteered opened up Grace for our family and friends as we grieved, remembered and celebrated the life of my mom. Many might say, "It's the least we could do," but I can't begin to express the blessing that my Grace family has been to me: praying for mom after many health issues and hospital visits, during my mom's hospice stay and after her passing. The love and care shown at her celebration of life were unparalleled. After her service, my dad said to my husband, "Wow....there really is something with this church thing. I think I may need to start going." Praise be to God and every one of you for having a hand in that.

Who is Ready to Celebrate?

By Chrissy Gast

After our congregational meeting on Sunday, May 4th, we will have an ice cream social to celebrate our ministries, and all the wonderful work God is doing through our congregation in new and exciting ways. And for those who appreciate some healthy competition, we will be served ice cream by the Sunday morning service who lost the food drive in March, so come relish (or sulk) in the outcome!

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say, Rejoice!" - Philippians 4:4

This verse reminds me of a song from my childhood - maybe some of you are now singing it in your head too! It is so important for us to celebrate and rejoice in the work God is doing in our lives. During the services on Sunday, May 4th, we will get to hear stories from members of how they've experienced God through the various ministries of Grace.



As I look back over the past year, my heart is filled with joy and love. I had so many opportunities to be part of something bigger than myself and I am incredibly grateful. I loved celebrating the grand opening of our reinvigorated building with all of you. I had the opportunity to go to Christikon with our high schoolers and support them in their spiritual journey. I enjoyed a wonderful weekend at the Women's Retreat where I got to connect with some incredible women, share stories of how God is moving in our lives, and enjoy many smiles, tears and laughs. I was transformed through a mission trip to Belize as we worked alongside the people of Maya Mopan in support of the school, the church, and the community, building long-lasting relationships with extraordinary people. And these are just the big moments - there were so many other smaller moments throughout the year that filled my heart.

As I wrap up my year as president, I am so thankful for this church family and the ways you continue to show up for each other. I look forward to continuing to watch our ministries flourish, just from a different vantage point. I can confidently say that I have been transformed over my 3 years on the Vision Board, and I know God isn't finished with me yet.

In addition to celebrating, we will also be electing new Vision Board members at the congregational meeting on May 4th. Your voice is so important to our congregation's future - we hope you will join us!



Volunteer Celebration!

Sunday
April 6th
9:30am-12:00pm

Join us in honoring the incredible Grace volunteers! Enjoy treats, recognition of our volunteers, a gratitude board, and discover various opportunities to get involved!

Easter EGGSTRAVAGANZA



APRIL 13TH
11:30AM-1:00PM

Easter egg hunt, food & games
*Please bring your own basket for the egg hunt.



WOMEN'S HALF DAY GETAWAY

RECYCLE • REPURPOSE • REUSE

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE IN HARMONY WITH CREATION

SATURDAY, MAY 3RD
9:00AM -11:30AM
GRACE FELLOWSHIP HALL
NO NEED TO REGISTER



Youth Summer Programs




High school youth (grades 9-12, including incoming 9th graders) are invited to join a service project trip to Chicago from June 21st to 28th, organized by Praying Pelican Missions. Transportation will be provided via large 12-15 passenger vans.




Summer Stretch is a vibrant ministry for students in grades 4-8, operating every Thursday from July 10 to August 14, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Participants must be dropped off and picked up at Grace Lutheran Church, with activities including service projects and recreational outings each week.




During a week in summer, teens can escape everyday life, bond with peers from the Midwest, and engage in discussions about God. Daily speakers share inspiring stories, and the camp offers diverse activities, including music, movies, and games, ensuring a fun experience filled with laughter and meaningful moments.



VBS 2025

June 9th - 12th
Ages 4 years - 6th Grade
Registration closes June 2, 2025

Joint vacation bible school between Lord of Life in Ramsey and Grace Lutheran in Andover. Hosted by Lord of Life at 14501 Nowthen Blvd NW, Andover, MN.

Ages 4 years thru 1st grade completion
VBS runs 9:00am - 12:00pm
Early Registration (by May 7th) \$45.00
Regular Registration (after May 7th) \$55.00

Ages 2nd grade thru 6th grade completion
VBS runs 9:00am - 3:00pm
Early Registration (by May 7th) \$85.00
Regular Registration (after May 7th) \$95.00



Register by using the QR Code or online at lol.org/ministries/kids/vbs

Grace Lutheran Church

13655 Round Lake Blvd. NW

Andover, MN 55304

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Anoka, MN 55303

Holy Week Services



Palm Sunday
April 13, 2025
8:30am Worship
10:15am Worship



Maundy Thursday
April 17, 2025
6:30pm Worship &
Dinner
(*this is a change.)



Good Friday
April 18, 2025
7:00pm Worship

Easter Sunday

April 20, 2025

7:00am Sunrise
Worship
8:30am Traditional
Worship
10:15 Contemporary
Worship


Grace Lutheran Church
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ANDOVER MN 55304
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