

Funeral Service

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

10:30 AM

Hitchcock Methodist Church
Hitchcock, South Dakota

Officiant

Rev. Steven Behrens

Music

Paula Tollefson - Pianist

- Congregational Hymns -

Hymn Of Promise

Jesus Is Calling

In My Heart There Rings A Melody

Precious Lord Take My Hand

Esther's Hymn Sing

Just A Closer Walk With Thee

I'll Fly Away

Casket Bearers

Esther's Grandchildren

Interment

Altoona Cemetery

Hitchcock, South Dakota

*Thank you for your many kindnesses
evidenced in thought, word and
deed, and for your attendance.*

The family of Esther Gilchrist



In Loving Memory



Esther Gilchrist

March 31, 1929

—

September 4, 2025

Kuhler
Funeral Home

1360 Dakota Avenue South
Huron, South Dakota 57350
605-352-4234
www.kuhlerfuneralhome.com



Esther Eckmann, the daughter of John and Alice (Meyer) Eckmann, was born on March 31, 1929, in Huron, South Dakota. Esther lived her entire life in Beadle County, attended Richland Township School and graduated from Cavour High School in 1946. She also attended Huron College and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Esther was an elementary school teacher for 23 years: two years in rural schools, one year in Iroquois, two years in Huron, and 18 years as the third grade teacher in Hitchcock before her retirement in 1984. During that time Esther gave birth to four children: Janie, Barbara, Tom and Jon.

Esther married Warren Gilchrist on November 22, 1947. The couple resided in Beadle County on a farm and taught in rural schools nearby as well as farmed. In 1962, the couple moved to Hitchcock, South Dakota and have lived there ever since.

Upon retiring from teaching Esther became a member of South Dakota Health Net (an effort to achieve non-smoking areas in South Dakota Restaurants) and was one of the pioneers in that field.



Esther was a life-long Methodist and enjoyed singing in the church choir. She also sang with many community chorus groups through-out her life such as the Sweet Adelines, the Heartland Chorus, and Dakota Harmony. In 2002 Esther joined the Sr. Citizen Line Dance Group which would entertain in nursing homes each month.

Esther wrote two children's books about two baby squirrels named "*Billy and Becky*" that were raised by the family in 1985. She also wrote, directed, and produced an operetta on the History of Hitchcock for the Hitchcock Centennial in 1981, and then again for the 2006 Hitchcock Quasquicentennial. Esther was

awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from President Obama in 2015 as well as was a candidate for Spirit of Dakota in 2017.

Esther enjoyed golfing and activities at the Hitchcock Fitness Center. Besides participating in her church activities, Esther was also a Delta Kappa Gamma member since 1981. She also served on the Beadle Jerauld County Red Cross Board, and received honors for over 60 years of membership in the SDCFEL (Extension Club).

Grateful for having shared in her life are her daughters, Janie (John) Person of Watkins, Colorado and Barbara (Edwin) Christwitz of Clearlake, California; her sons, Thomas Gilchrist (Sherry O'Connor) of Springfield and Jon (Sandra) Gilchrist of Bixby, Oklahoma, five grandchildren, Daniel Person, David (Michelle) Person of Colorado, Susan Stingily (Karl) of Alabama, Dr. Dane Alexander Person of New Mexico and Rebekah (John) Kindall of Rapid City; 15 great-grandchildren; 3 great-great-grandchildren; and her brother, Ervin (Jean) Eckmann of Huron.



Esther was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Warren; a grandson, Joshua Gilchrist; a granddaughter, Stephanie Saunders; a great-grandson, Dominic, and two sisters, Neva Hammer and Edna Reilly.