



## Avis Elster

February 25, 1921 - April 6, 2021

Avis Minnetta (Peterson) Elster was born in Deadwood, South Dakota February 25, 1921, to Arnie and Myrtle (Nelson) Peterson. The house she was born in is still lived in, high upon the side of a hill. Her Grandmother Mattie Nelson was her mid-wife. Her father, who moved here from Bergen, Norway when he was 20 years old, took a 160 acre homestead in the Van Metre township area in Central South Dakota. He also worked as a bridge building foreman for the railroad, his route taking him to Chadron, Nebraska. Avis's mother, uncle and maternal grandparents also each took 160 acre homesteads in the same area. All 'proved up' on their homestead claims and it became theirs after five years. Later, Avis, her mother, her father, and her older brother, all lived in their personal boxcar quarters while her mother did the cooking for the railroad workers, so that they could be near her father.

As a child, Avis lived in, or near, railroad towns in Central South Dakota. She lived across from the capitol building in Pierre, SD, then, later, in Whitewood, SD, and then, on the prairie, near Van Metre, SD, and Murdo, SD. Here she and her siblings walked the 1.5 miles across rolling hills to their one room country school house, which was situated next to their small country Lutheran Church where her family was active, and where she was confirmed. The church, Emmanuel Lutheran, built next to White Clay Creek, is now a historical landmark. Avis's mom kept Avis home for one year, on the farm, after Eighth grade, to teach her more sewing and cooking skills. The local

High School was far away and Avis would have to live in a dorm. Avis's ninth through eleventh grades she lived with aunts and uncles. She attended Ramsey in Minneapolis for ninth grade living with Selma and Alvin and George, Al, and May. Ninth through Eleventh grades Avis lived with Parnell and Hilda, Joel, Paul, and Obed in SD attending Wessington Springs HS. Her senior year she attended Augustana Academy in Canton, SD. Avis had a beautiful soprano voice, often sang solos, always sang in a choir, and over the years, she directed children's and adult choirs.

Avis then worked in Minneapolis for a few years, after attending secretary school. She met and married W. LeRoy Elster, a Lutheran Seminarian and soon to be pastor. They were married October 13, 1943, in Minneapolis, MN, not long after LeRoy was ordained. Together they served Lutheran churches in: Mohall and Sherwood, ND; a Service Center in Monterey, CA; churches in Bottineau, ND; Evangelical Lutheran Home Mission Churches in Lemon Grove, CA; and Kalispell, MT. From there, they served American Lutheran Church in Milbank, SD, and the First English Lutheran Church in Lennox, SD. Avis and LeRoy retired in 1979 to Sioux Falls, SD, where their daughter, Eloa, and her family, lived. LeRoy became associate visitation pastor for Hope Lutheran in Sioux Falls, and later a fill in pastor for numerous churches in south eastern SD

Avis was the ideal pastor's wife, a strong and loving support for her husband, and active in serving the churches alongside him. They were both very hospitable, often inviting friends and relatives in for meals or as overnight guests. More than once, they had every member of the church they were presently serving into their home, over a period of time, for cake, coffee, and fellowship. She always had coffee and a variety of baked goods ready for family and friends when they came to visit. Her home was warm and welcoming, full of the love of Jesus. She was also an excellent seamstress and sewed many an outfit for herself or her three girls, often late into the night. She loved to travel, and with her husband, regularly took the family via car across country to visit one or the other of their parents, being either

Washington State or Minneapolis. She packed meals to last the entire trip. Later, she and LeRoy led tours to Israel, visited daughter Marlene and family in the country of Jordan, or traveled to Norway and Europe or across the USA with daughter Carol. She drove herself to Minneapolis until she was 86 years old. She lived on her own for 10 years after her husband passed. She was strong, caring, full of energy and stamina and stayed active in the church until a mild stroke affected her in 2010. Avis lived 2010-2013 with Marlene or Carol in Minnesota. Avis lived at Bethany Meadows in Brandon, SD, 2013-2019, near Eloa. February 2019-April 2021 Avis lived at Victoria Care Center/Becky's Place near Carol. Avis passed at Ridgeview Hospital, Waconia, MN, after a massive heart attack the day before. Avis passed into eternity and into Jesus's arms in peace at 11:50 am, April 6, 2021, with family present. She was very much family oriented, and a wonderful loving mother and grandmother. She loved her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Avis was over 100 years old when she passed.

Avis will be greatly missed, and mourned by her family and friends. Preceding her in death are her husband, LeRoy, her parents, Arnie and Myrtle Peterson, two brothers, Gilman Peterson and Victor Peterson, sister, Sylvia Nelson, her oldest daughter, Eloa Bruns, Eloa's husband Jim Bruns, Sr, and her six year old granddaughter, Carissa McCleary. Surviving her are daughter, Marlene Gustafson (Kim), daughter, Carol McCleary, grandchildren, Jim Bruns, Jr (Michelle), Jennifer Skyberg, Daniel Gustafson (Abbey), Troy Gustafson (Rachel), Ryan McCleary (Allison), Erica Gustafson, Eric McCleary ( Heidi), Kari Rickenbach (Joseph), Laura Ann McCleary, and fourteen great grandchildren.

Public services will begin at 12:00 noon Saturday, April 17 at Peace Lutheran Church, 5509 W. 41st St. Sioux Falls. Visitation with the family present will be 5 to 7 p.m. Friday at Heritage Funeral Home, Sioux Falls.

# Tribute Wall

LG

“ So sorry for your loss, she was a wonderful mother and grandmother. I know this is a sorrowful time, but you can take comfort in knowing that she is with her loving husband now and she's happy and at peace with Jesus. Sending you love and prayers â 𐄂 🙏



Laurie Holter Gehring - April 16, 2021 at 12:00 AM

LE

“ Paster and Avis were our neighbors in Lennox we lived at the home on the corner Sam side of street with the Beauty Salon . They were great neighbors and good friends . Lots of memories Paster was the best Luther league youth paster ever ! I have always had a special place in my heart ! Avis was a amazing woman I never ever seen her with out her beautiful smile !They have been gone for along time but always will be in my â 𐄂,



Linda Olson Elhassy - April 16, 2021 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ She was a very special person, I was the head of funerals and she worked many of them with me. Bless all of you.



Diane Feller - April 14, 2021 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ *May God comfort your family. And May you celebrate the legacy she left for your family! God bless youâ*

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**Dee Dee & John Lund** - April 13, 2021 at 12:00 AM