Erma Lydia Zabel Zabel Henrichs was born on May 28, 1924 in Smith County, Kansas. She was the daughter of Arthur John and Christine D. (Beckmann) Zabel. Erma was baptized as an infant at St. John Lutheran Church at Athol. She was confirmed in April 1938 and was proud of the fact that her class was the last group who were confirmed in the German language at St. John. The church played a very important role in her family life as she was growing up and this continued throughout her entire life. Their family farm was located just ¼ mile west of the church.

She attended rural schools in Smith County and then managed the grocery store in Athol for 6 years. Even though she never attended high school, with hard work and self-initiative, Erma attended Bethany College in Lindsborg for two years and was certified as an elementary teacher. She sang in the Messiah Festival while she was at Bethany and the Swedish influence from Lindsborg from those years was a special part of her life.

She was united in marriage to Donald F. Zabel on August 3, 1953 at St. John Lutheran Church. She was proud that she was able to serve as a first grade teacher at Smith Center Grade School in 1953-54. Then Beth Donene joined Don and Erma's family, followed 20 months later by Barbara Jean. They worked hard on their farm, and eventually also added a dairy operation, in addition to the farming activities. Don passed away on their 18th wedding anniversary.

One year later, Erma and her daughters moved to Salina where both daughters attended college. She was employed in a variety of jobs while in Salina and was always a reliable employee. She eventually returned to the family farm south of Athol to provide care for her elderly mother until she passed away.

Erma and her mother often conversed in the German language, especially if the topic was one that they wanted to keep between only the two of them.

On September 27, 1984, Erma was united in marriage to Leo Henrichs in Denver, Colorado. Leo had also grown up in the Athol area, so they had many common bonds to that area. Shortly after their marriage, Leo and Erma moved to Salina to be closer to Erma’s children. They were members of St. John Lutheran Church in Salina. Together they greatly enjoyed watching college basketball, especially Leo’s alma mater, the KU Jayhawks. Their grandsons, Matt and John, were a great joy to both of them. Leo passed away on June 20, 2002. Throughout her life, Erma loved gardening and flowers and was generous in sharing her bountiful harvest with many friends and relatives. She also sewed many beautiful quilts and crocheted many afghans, which will continue to be enjoyed for many years to come.

Due to her struggle with dementia and declining health, Erma moved to the Salina Presbyterian Manor in 2005. “Jesus Loves Me” was one of her favorite hymns and several of the staff at the Manor enjoyed singing it with her. She left her struggles on this earth and went to be with her Heavenly Father on January 14, 2011.

She was preceded in death by her parents, two husbands, a brother, Mervin Zabel, and a great grandson, Noah Perry. She is survived by daughters, Beth and husband David J. Perry of Gypsum, and Barbara and husband Adam Herrman of Salina; a brother, Clarence Zabel and wife Betty of Smith Center; two grandsons, Matthew Perry and John Herrman; both of Salina; and three great-grandchildren, Jackson, Elijah, and Olivia Perry, all of Salina; and multiple nieces, nephews, and cousins.
Celebrating The Life Of
Erma L. Henrichs

Date Of Birth: May 28, 1924
Date of Death: January 14, 2011

Smith Co., KS
Salina, KS

Funeral Services
St. John Lutheran Church
Athol, Kansas
11:00 A.M., Saturday, January 22, 2011

Officiating
Jim Germer, PMA

Music
Congregational Hymns
"Children Of The Heavenly Father"
"Praise To The Lord, The Almighty"
Accompanist - Kathy Beckmann
Soloist - Evelyn Wilson
"The Old Rugged Cross"

Casket Bearers
Matthew Perry                John Herrman
John Zabel                   Taylor Zabel
Kenton Weltmer

Final Resting Place
St. John Lutheran Cemetery
Athol, Kansas