

Hiawatha, KS

Mary Elsbury, of Hiawatha, died Wednesday, August 14 at the age of 87.

The funeral service will be Monday, August 19 at 10 a.m. at the South Haven Baptist Church, in Belton, Missouri, with visitation beginning at 10 a.m. Burial will follow at the Floral Hills East Cemetery in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

A memorial visitation will be Sunday, August 18 at 3 to 5 p.m. at the First Baptist Church at 210 Lodge Road in Hiawatha.

Mary was born on January 14, 1932 to Alonzo F. and Zelma Jeanette Meredith Moon on the grounds of her grandparents farm outside of Sedalia, MO.

Mary is survived by her husband, Sterling L. Elsbury of Hiawatha, KS. She is survived by two sisters, Jeanette Viebrock of Sedalia, MO and Helen Marie (Lawrence) Adams of Smithton, MO, and brother-in-law, Bill Hayes of Holden, MO. She is also survived by her son, David (Brenda) Elsbury of Hiawatha, KS, and five grandchildren, Jessica (Brian) Henks of Gardner, KS, Jennifer (Jarred) Kneisel of Hutchinson, KS, Jeffrey (Amanda) Elsbury of Wichita, KS, Mason Binns of Falls Church, VA, and Joseph Binns of New York City, NY. She is also survived by five great-grandchildren: Owen Kneisel, Alexander Henks, Ethan Kneisel, Caleb Henks, and Rebecca Kneisel. Mary is survived by many loving nieces, nephews, and other extended family.

Mary is preceded in death by her daughter, Karen Elsbury Binns Craig, as well as her sister, Aleta Jean Hayes. She is also preceded in death by her parents, Alonzo F. and Zelma Moon.

Mary grew up on a farm outside Green Ridge, MO with her parents and three younger sisters: Aleta Jean, Jeanette, and Helen Marie. Mary did chores around the farm and helped her father as well as her mother with their large garden. She attended several small one-room schools over the years, and finally moved to larger high school. After graduation, she moved to Sedalia and attended business college, desiring to be a secretary. She got a job with Metropolitan Life Insurance, and was even offered a job in Denver, CO, but turned it down to stay closer to home.

Sterling and Mary met in 1953 when Sterling became pastor of her home church, but did not begin dating until the summer of August 1955. They were married on December 2, 1955 at Hughesville Baptist Church in Hughesville, MO. To that union, two children were blessed, David and Karen. Mary was a wonderful mother, help-mate in ministry, and encourager.

After high school, Mary attended business college and then worked for five years for Metropolitan Life. After she and Sterling married, Mary worked as a bank teller and in several secretarial roles as they moved about. She served as the secretary to the Assistant to the

President at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as the secretary to the Dean and the secretary to the President at William Jewell College, where she retired in 1990. In the following years, Mary voluntarily served as the secretary for the Butler-Nevada Baptist Association alongside Sterling until 1998 and led a mentoring support program for ministers' wives.

Mary enjoyed her role as a teacher of all ages, from preschool to adults, in Bible Study and Sunday School. She was consistently part of the ministry of music in the church through the years, leading in worship, singing with the choirs, and sharing her individual voice.

Mary was a prolific card writer with the most encouraging way about her words. Mary took great joy in watching her birds, especially the cardinals, and caring for her flowers. She loved to collect angels and bells.