



## Carol E. Gerken

November 18, 1934 - May 4, 2026

The tender soul of Carol E. Gerken was received into the loving arms of her Heavenly Father on Sunday, May 3, 2026, with her children by her side. She was grateful for the sun shining through her window that afternoon, as well as the assurance of her family's enduring love and harmony.

Carol took great care in all she did. From sewing clothes for her children in whatever styles and fabrics they chose, to lovingly crafting quilts for each of her grandchildren, her thoughtfulness was evident in every detail. She lived her life just as she kept her home, neat and welcoming. Hosting after-church coffee and cookies for family members—and often a few tag-alongs—was a Sunday tradition that brought her much joy.

Carol was born on November 18, 1934, in Napoleon Township to the late Alvin and Mildred (Schroeder) Helberg. She was raised on the family farm, where she formed lifelong friendships with classmates during daily school bus rides to Napoleon schools. Carol worked at Okolona Lumber Company and later at the Lankenau Law Office before marrying Norman F. Gerken on January 31, 1953. Together, they raised four daughters and three sons. She remained actively involved in her children's lives while also participating in PTL and the Ladies Guild at St. Paul Lutheran Church.

Much of her time was spent on her parents' farm, where she enjoyed gardening, canning, and freezing, as well as helping on the farm and making summer sausage. In later years, she lovingly cared for her aging parents.

In her later years, Carol cherished the companionship of her young-at-heart

Bible study group at St. Paul Lutheran Church, as well as gatherings with her lifelong school bus friends. She also enjoyed reading and attending her grandchildren's events.

Carol is survived by her children: Cindy (Cliff) Thompson, Brenda (Gary) Jones, Gregg Gerken (Amy Bohaty), Tamara Smith, Joel (Sue) Gerken, Janel (Dan) Witte, and Matthew Gerken; 19 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; her brother, Dean (Barb) Helberg; her sister-in-law, Rosie Helberg; and special friends, Marilyn and Irene. Along with her parents, she was also preceded in death by her husband, Norman and brother, Malcom "Sonny" Helberg.

Funeral services will be held at 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2026, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Napoleon, Ohio. Interment will follow at Riverview Memory Gardens, Defiance, Ohio. Visitation will be held at Rodenberger-Gray Funeral Home, Napoleon on Wednesday from 4:00–7:00 p.m. and on Thursday from 10:00–11:00 a.m. at the church.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions are suggested to the St. Paul Lutheran Radio Station - WTPS 94.1 LPFM.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at [www.rodenbergergray.com](http://www.rodenbergergray.com)

# Upcoming Events

## Visitation

MAY 13. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Rodenberger-Gray Funeral Home  
1010 Westmoreland Ave.  
Napoleon, OH 43545

## Visitation

MAY 14. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
1075 Glenwood Ave  
Napoleon, OH 43545

## Service

MAY 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
1075 Glenwood Ave  
Napoleon, OH 43545