

100 Years of the Association of Protestant Female Theologians in Germany presented at the German Protestant Church Congress in Hanover from 30 April to 4 May

Cornelia Schlarb

100 years of the Association of Protestant Female Theologians in Germany, what a reason to celebrate and to present the eventful history at the church congress in Hanover. I only discovered one other stand at the Market of Opportunities, which was actually looking back on 100 years of history, the Bank for Church and Diaconia.

Our stand at the Market of Opportunities was located directly at an entrance. The silver number 100 was visible from afar and led many people straight to us. The purple gown with colourful stole and Luther's roses always found admirers. We were often asked where this gown or stole could be bought and a lengthy conversation ensued. We had the statue of Ilse Härter and the corresponding roll-up from the Reformation exhibition on loan from our colleagues in the Protestant Church in the Rhineland. Ilse Härter and Hannelotte Reiffen were ordained to the ministry in 1943 by President Kurt Scharf of the Berlin Confessing Church, and later that year Scharf also ordained Ilse Fredrichsdorff.

Many took the time to study the informative roll-up and the timeline, which was displayed on four banners on the stand walls. People's curiosity was also aroused by the business cards with encouraging words by Tina Willms, which were available in abundance to take away. The author had made the texts available to the Association free of charge and Evelyn Beck-Pieler had designed them beautifully.

Interviews with strong, brave, courageous women on the three days of the market were a special experience. On Thursday morning, Christine Stradtner interviewed the young pastor Dr Tia Pelz from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, who is also involved as a social media activist. In the afternoon, Dr Heike Köhler asked retired bishop Dr Dr h.c. Margot Käßmann about her strong and courageous moments and what she stands up for. A large audience gathered around our stand to listen to this short interview. On Friday morning, Dr des. Carlotta Israel, a young academic who finished her dissertation about 'Protestant women's ordination in divided Germany. The 'Theologinnenfrage' in EKD, EKV, VELKD and BEK', answered Dr Cornelia Schlarb's questions. Carlotta is a versatile traveller, co-founder of the 'Kritische Religionswissenschafts- und The*ologie Tage' and writes for the digital magazine 'Eule'. She told us what makes her strong and courageous, where she gets 'fits of courage' and what she wants to tackle with courage. In the afternoon, we heard from Dr Eske Wollrad, Director of Evangelical Women in Germany, that EFID will soon be moving its office to Berlin and what makes it worthwhile to remain courageous and strong, even with reduced financial resources. Theologian and poet Tina Willms interviewed Hella Mahler on Saturday morning. Tina Willms explained how she discovered writing poetic texts after a period of illness. This encouraged her to write books and work as a freelance journalist. In the afternoon, Christiane Apitzsch-Pokoj interviewed regional bishop Bettina Schlauraff from the Evangelical Church in Central Germany, who spoke about her eventful and exciting work and what helps her to be strong and courageous.

The picture of the first nine Polish Lutheran women theologians ordained in Warsaw in May 2022, in which some visitors recognised acquaintances or themselves, encourages us not to let up and to continue to work for the ordination or consecration of women in places where they do not yet or no longer exist.

The guest book contains wishes of happiness and blessings for the 100th birthday of the Women's Theological Convention, entries from many people living in Germany or abroad who appreciate the work of the Convention and wish it strength and blessings for another 100 years.

Translated with DeepL.com (free version)