

ABOUT THE FUTURE

#5 Women and the Reformation

“I am prepared to lose everything, even life or limb. May God stand by me.” *“So wrote Argula von Grumbach (1492-1563/68?) from Bavaria, who found Martin Luther’s message of Christian freedom and equality empowering. This noble woman challenged an entire Catholic university in Ingolstadt in defense of Lutheran faith and was a student persecuted for “Lutheran heresy.” This best-selling lay author’s letter-treatises eventually disappeared under pressure from male authorities. Luther considered her a valiant hero of faith.”*

So we read in
Augsburg Fortress
Reformation 500
materials.



The role of women in the Reformation, and our Lutheran history to follow, is not understood by many. Katie Luther we may know. Argula von Grumbach, and so many women reformers, you may not. Today Lutherans are blessed with women pastors, bishops, teachers, healers and mystics. It has not always been so. Nor, are women spiritual leaders recognized equally even in all Lutheran denominations around the world. The Reformation continues.

Why might women today find the Lutheran message of “*Christian freedom and equality*” empowering? Answer: Because the world is not yet free.

During my pastoral internship in 1982 I met a German Lutheran trained theologian in her late 70s. She was a member of the congregation I served. One day she told me her story, how she had met an American Lutheran pastor, married and moved to the U.S. Her husband was from a Lutheran denomination that did not ordain women. Almost in passing she said, *“Of course, I couldn’t stay in prison forever . . .”* so she and her husband had changed churches.

“I couldn’t stay in prison forever!” I remember this woman clearly. She was articulate, often times took me to task after a sermon or Bible class; she clearly felt like her move to the U.S. had robbed her of an essential part of her identity, and her “inner monk” had long ago burst forth as the Reformer.

Lutheran women have been, and are, gifted proclaimers of the Word. They also carry stories of oppression, abuse, marginalization and struggle. In this they keep us close to the very essence of the Reformation.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has written, *“There is no more valuable investment than in a girl’s education.”* Lutherans would agree!

(More at www.oregonsynod.org/500)



With you on the journey,

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