

Sarah Vecera receives Katharina Zell Prize 2025

The Protestant Women's Association in Hesse and Nassau honors the UEM's education officer for her commitment to overcoming racism, sexism, and discrimination in the church

(Darmstadt/Wuppertal, September 3, 2025) "Let us be courageous, let us be uncomfortable, let us be caring. Just as Katharina Zell was. Let us be united, feminist, and intersectional—just as the Protestant women exemplify. Let us be political and stand up for our values, as Jesus exemplified. Then, I am convinced, we can be a church and a society that does not divide, but unites." With these words, Sarah Vecera concluded her response at the award ceremony of the Protestant Women's Association in Hesse and Nassau on September 2 at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences in Darmstadt.

More than a hundred guests were present when the theologian, podcaster, and education officer accepted the Katharina Zell Prize. "The church is not nearly as open to all social groups as we often believe. We need people who hold up a mirror to us and make us aware of where we exclude others, where we lack sensitivity and awareness. That is why the regional association is honoring Sarah Vecera for her commitment to overcoming racism, sexism, and discrimination in the church," says Anja Schwier-Weinrich, jury member and executive pastor in the regional association of Protestant women in Hesse and Nassau. "She is a strong role model as a feminist and encourager on the long road to a good world and a good church for all."

Putting diversity on the church agenda

Sarah Vecera is an education officer at the United Evangelical Mission (UEM) with a focus on "racism and the church." On her Instagram profile [@moyo.me](https://www.instagram.com/moyo.me), she takes a look at racism – in society and in the church. In the podcast "Stachel & Herz" (Thorn & Heart), she also talks about discrimination in the church and dreams of a community that is open to all. "With her books 'How did Jesus become white?' and 'Together different', as well as her role as the creative force behind the 'Alle-Kinder-Bibel' (All Children's Bible), Sarah Vecera has irreversibly put the participation of all and the issue of diversity on the churches' agenda," Schwier-Weinrich continues. "She does this in a very personal, always authentic way, making herself very vulnerable. We are grateful for the critical questioning of the often entrenched perception that everyone is always welcome in our communities and institutions. We are grateful for the pointers to where we overlook barriers and exclude people through language, spaces, and behavior."

"Sarah Vecera brings language about issues into spaces where silence about them was previously comfortable," emphasizes Hadija Haruna-Oelker. The Frankfurt-based journalist, presenter, and author gave the laudatory speech at the award ceremony. "She brings dignity and recognition for the experiences of marginalized people into the church so that they can find themselves there. And it is also thanks to her work that discrimination in church debates is now being noticed by the general public, the so-called mainstream."

Women have learned to form alliances

"The fact that this award is named after Katharina Zell touches me deeply," says Sarah Vecera. "A woman who, at a time when women were not supposed to play a role, spoke out – for the people, for the church, for justice. She was uncomfortable, she was treated with hostility – and that was precisely where her strength lay. Women have always fought for and kept spaces open in our church. They have learned to form alliances, often against resistance. And they know that without an intersectional perspective, there can be no true feminism. Because it's about the liberation of all: our struggles are intertwined – against racism, against sexism, against classism, against all forms of oppression."

About „UEM“

The United Evangelical Mission (UEM) with offices in Wuppertal (Germany), Indonesia and Tanzania is an international, equal communion of 39 members, including 32 Protestant churches in Africa and Asia as well as six Protestant churches and the v. Bodelschwingh Foundation Bethel in Germany. The UEM consistently pursues a holistic understanding of mission. This includes improving the living conditions of suffering and disadvantaged people while respecting their personal dignity and taking their cultural context into account.