



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

Department for Planning  
and Operations

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*From the LWF Institutional Memory  
DPO/Archive services*

## A GALLERY OF PORTRAITS: LWF GENERAL SECRETARIES SINCE 1947

### 1. Sylvester Michelfelder

Country of origin: New Washington, Ohio, USA  
Date of birth: 27.10.1889  
Date of death: 30.12.1951  
Period of mandate: 1947-1951



**Short biography:** From German descent, Michelfelder was not an academic theologian. It was his skill as pastor, organizer and team leader that caused Ralph Long, director of the National Lutheran Council in New York to send him as commissioner of the American Section of the Lutheran World Convention to the rising World Council of Churches. On 18 July 1945, he arrived with his wife in Geneva after having crossed the ocean on the *Miraposa* and travelled by rail from Cherbourg which gave him ample evidence of emergency needs in Europe. Operations in Germany in the early post-war period was the first task of Michelfelder which led into close ties of confidence and networks of cooperation with German church leaders such as Hanns Lilje and Hans Meiser. His major accomplishment became then the careful preparation of the first Assembly of the LWF which represented international interaction between sisters and brothers of the same faith. Michelfelder had clear ideas for an Assembly with a three-part program: confessing the truth in a confused world, concentrated on the Word, the church and the sacraments, a section on evangelism, stewardship, foreign missions and aid operation and a final section on facing the problems in a troubled world. His abilities as an administrator became apparent particularly in two connections: when he prepared and led the First Assembly and when he led in the formation of a functional structure for the whole LWF, the Geneva Secretariat and the national committees. This was his main task during his last years, when the provisional decisions of the earliest years had to be transferred into sustainable working principles. He received wide recognition for his successful efforts to bring cooperation into being, efforts that may be understood against the background of the unprecedented difficulties of the historical situation.

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Theodore Bachmann p. 481-487.

## 2. Carl Elof Lund-Quist

Country of origin: Lindsborg, Kansas, USA  
Date of birth: 19.09.1908  
Date of death: 26.08.1965  
Period of mandate: 1951-1960



Short biography: Assistant to the first LWF Executive Secretary, Sylvester C. Michelfelder, and acting Executive Secretary after his death in 1951, he was involved in planning the first Assembly in Lund, 1947 and he was responsible for the preparation of the Assemblies in Hanover 1952 and Minneapolis in 1957 and to a lesser degree Helsinki in 1963. He received the call to become a pastor and soon discovered a more tolerant ecumenical component of Lutheranism in the Lutheran student movement, which opened the world to him. But he always retained his strong commitment to personal, spiritual formation through communal Bible study, prayer groups and close fellowship. He was not a man of vision but a capable enabler who could realize the vision of others. He was known as an administrator who did not dominate in discussions but who was a good listener instilling confidence among his co-workers and isolate significant issues for further deliberations. Following the sudden death of Michelfelder in December 1951, Lund-Quist became this successor in 1952. He was especially pleased with the decision to establish a Department of Theology and was also a key supporter of the establishment of an LWF Foundation for Inter-confessional research created then in 1965. Another important concern was the place of the laity and of youth. In his report to the LWF Executive Committee in 1953, he stated with satisfaction the decision of the Hanover Assembly, 1952 to have a larger number of lay people on the Committee. As the second LWF Executive Secretary, Lund-Quist travelled extensively in the years between the Assembly in Hanover 1952 and the Third Assembly in Minneapolis, 1957. He helped create the first regional conferences in Africa 1955 and in Asia 1956. His organization of a Second All Latin America Conference in 1954 helped unite the dispersed Lutherans on that continent. He also lined up the plight of Lutheran minority churches, especially in Eastern Europe. The cold war between Russia and the United States overshadowed the preparation of the LWF third Assembly and in his last report to the Executive Committee, 1958, Lund-Quist summarized the work of the LWF in its first decade, noted his conviction that the local congregation is the best representation of the church and that regular contacts with member churches is crucial. Due to health reasons, he resigned from office in 1960.

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Eric W. Gritsch, p. 488-437.

### 3. Kurt Schmidt-Clausen

Country of origin: Hanover, Germany  
Date of birth: 01.10.1920  
Date of death: 25.01.1993  
Period of mandate: 1960-1965



Short biography: Having being a delegate of his church at the LWF Assembly in Hanover 1952 and Minneapolis 1957 and at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Evanston, 1954, he became the third General Secretary. He had very clear cut theological positions. For Schmidt-Clausen, the most important characteristic of the Reformation is the “attempt to put truth above everything else, one cannot speak about the truth without thinking of the document that bears witness to truth. All action and the life of the church of Jesus Christ need to be tested by what in the Holy Scriptures is clearly the will of God”. He always underlined that the primary *raison d’être* of the Lutheran church lies within the framework of the Ecumenical movement: the Lutheran church must interpret the truths that came out of the Lutheran Reformation that is the total understanding of the Christian message purely on the basis of the Gospel. He resisted all attempts by those who wanted to transform Christianity into an element of immanent politico-social progress as for him Christianity. A growing diplomatic dexterity as well as the proper mix of clear theological profile, brotherly respect for the opinions, working styles and traditions of other churches and profound commitment to the cause, helped Schmidt-Clausen to make his mandate a success, always aware that his actual strength lay in theology. After having been assistant Executive Secretary, he became acting Executive Secretary during Lund-Quist’s sick leave, finally at its meeting in Warsaw in 1961, the Executive Committee appointed him Executive Secretary (after the Helsinki Assembly General Secretary). As Executive Secretary, he had to prepare the assembly in Helsinki in 1963 which aimed at adopting an up-to-date formulation of the Lutheran doctrine of justification. In 1965, he became Oberlandeskirchenrat in the Hanover church office, in charge of the desks for mission, ecumenics, and church press. In 1970, the Hanover church senate nominated him to become Landesuperintendent for the diocese of Osnabrück an office he held until his retirement in 1982.

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Hans-Völker Hertrich, p. 494-499.

## 4. André Appel

Country of origin: France  
Date of birth: 20.12.1921  
Date of death: 01.11.2007  
Period of mandate: 1965-1974

**Short biography:** The son of a pastor who deeply identified with the small minority church in Alsace, France but also had an international profile, Appel's was greatly influenced by the unstable political and cultural situation in his home country which remains a buffer zone. As a student André Appel broadened his cultural and linguistic horizons by spending the first years of his theological studies at German universities and after passing his finals in Paris, going on to postgraduate studies in North America. He was General Secretary of the French Protestant Federation of Churches when he was called to Geneva. Appels' first years as General Secretary of the LWF were marked by his endeavours to give a new orientation to the ecumenical dialogues and increasing the involvement of youth, women and the younger churches. Appel encouraged the member churches to regard the diversity of the Federation as a privilege. Appel's vision was marked by optimism and the plea to look forward. Nevertheless he affirmed that it would be unrealistic if one were merely to listen without redefining the strategy and setting priorities, emphasizing particularly the role of the churches from the South, because the need to change or at least to adjust was so evident in the 70s: "the predominance of the churches on both sides of the Atlantic is so overwhelming that some take it for granted and others are resigned to it. But today we hear the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America telling us that as Lutheran churches, they have their own identity and way of looking at their role which may be different from that which has come out of the sixteenth century tradition. Taking this into account, we may realize that in the past decades, we have not taken full advantage of the opportunities the LWF offers for mutual enrichment". Appel was determined to take very seriously the essence of the Evian theme: "Sent to the World", preparing to set new priorities with regard to the basic meaning of mission, the definition and implementation of a new social ethic based on inclusiveness and human rights, and the consequences of the resolution on pulpit and altar fellowship. The LWF experienced its most thorough revision to that time during Appel's term in office and his activities and vision can only be assessed in the light of this transition. He returned to France, after having been elected president of his home church: the Church of the Augsburg Confession of Alsace and Lorraine.

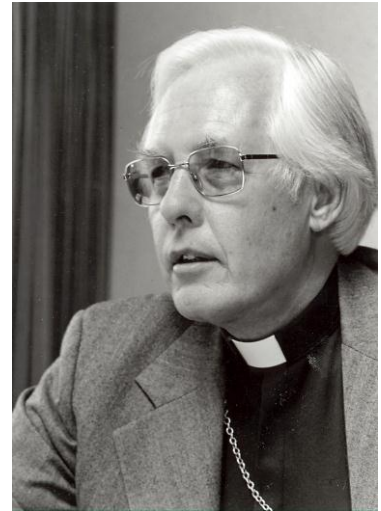


More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Jens Høger Schjorring, p. 499-503

## 5. Carl Henning Mau, Jr

Country of origin: Seattle, USA  
Date of birth: 22.06.1922  
Date of death: 31.03.1995  
Period of mandate: 1974-1985

**Short biography:** In the six generations of Lutheran pastors in his family, dating back to 1762 in Germany, Carl Mau served as coordinator for the Fourth Assembly in Helsinki, 1963 and accepted in 1964 the post of LWF assistant General Secretary, serving two General Secretaries: Kurt Schmidt-Clausen and André Appel. In 1972 he returned to New York City, as General Secretary of the US National Committee of the LWF. In 1974, the LWF Executive Committee in Northfield, Minnesota, elected Mau: LWF General Secretary. When Carl Mau who had served as Appel's associate General Secretary, succeeded Appel, certain controversial issues were still pending. He was re-elected to this post in 1977 at the Sixth Assembly of the LWF in Dar El Salaam and served until 1985. He returned to the United States as associate pastor of the Reformation Lutheran Church in Washington DC until his retirement in 1989.



Carl Mau was one of a number of younger American Lutheran pastors and students who, after World War II, volunteered their services to assist in the rehabilitation of the Lutheran churches in war-torn Europe and went to Hanover, Germany in 1950 where he became associated with Hanns Lilje, bishop of Hanover church and LWF President in 1952. Lilje's influence on Mau as mentor, colleague, pastor and friend was considerable. The young Mau was first exposed to the world Lutheran communion by his work at the Second Assembly. Carl Mau's tenure as General Secretary was filled with defining moments for the Federation. During his time of service the Sixth and Seventh LWF Assemblies were held in Dar El Salaam, 1957 where he played a key role in the Assembly's statement on Southern Africa. and Budapest, 1984 the former being the first such gathering in a Third World country and the latter being the first such Christian assemblage in socialist Eastern. In respect to East-West tensions, Mau played a key role and led the Federation's crucial move towards reconciliation. Carl Mau's tenure as LWF General Secretary was filled with defining moments for the Federation. In addition to steering the Geneva Secretariat through a time when the decision concerning LWF structure made at Evian were tested, modified, solidified, he brought the LWF to a new consciousness of its global opportunities in respect to issues such as the life of the African churches caused by the horrors of apartheid, and also the many tensions between East and West. Women and youth increased participation in the LWF received also his support. In his nearly 35 years of association with the LWF, Carl Mau who made his mark within Lutheranism not as an academic theologian but as a dedicated and at times prophetic leader, thus spanned in his career with the Federation a growing understanding of the Lutheran reality of communion. A milestone statement was adopted at the Budapest Assembly on the "Self-Understanding and Task of the Lutheran World Federation", now recognized as a key stage on the way "From Federation to Communion".

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Norman A. Hjelm, p. 504-508



## 6. Gunnar Johan Staalsett

Country of origin: Nordkapp, Norway  
Date of birth: 10.02.1935  
Period of mandate: 1985-1994



Short biography: After theology studies in Norway and in the USA, he became the general Secretary of the Church of Norway Council on Foreign Relations which is also the national committee of the LWF. During the sixties and seventies, he served on several committees and boards of the national church. From 1970 to 1977, he served as vice chairperson of the LWF Commission on Church Cooperation, from 1970 to 1974 on the board of Radio Voice of the Gospel and from 1975 to 1977 on the Commission on Communication. He was on Central and Executive Committees of the World Council of Churches from 1983 to 1985 and on the general committee of the United Bible Societies from 1984 to 1985. In 1985, he was elected LWF General Secretary, assuming his function from August onwards. Ordained in 1962, he joined the LWF Geneva staff and immediately indicated that during his term the “two faces” of the LWF would be in the areas of ecumenical action and human rights. He requested the Executive Committee to authorize the appointment of two assistant LWF General Secretaries for Ecumenical Affairs and for International Affairs and Human Rights. Faced with the LWF’s growing financial difficulties and long felt organizational problems, the new General Secretary formulated his goal as brining about “unity of purpose, cooperation and coordination” and reducing the Geneva staff and costs by 25 per cent while maintaining global services and programs. As to the unity of purpose within the LWF, it was from the outset clear that Staalsett would move aggressively to realize a vision of the LWF as a communion of churches rather than a Federation. He did not miss an opportunity to focus on this goal, attempting to make concrete what communion might mean in terms of structure and program priorities. He saw restructuring not only as a vehicle for closer coordination but as a move that caused power to shift from the Northern churches to those of the Two-Thirds World, from the wealth to those who were deprived. By emphasizing communion, he moved the Federation from a male and clergy dominated leadership to one in which lay people and women has a greater say. Communion must be seen in relationship to established realities of dependence and domination by churches of history, wealth, size, theology, culture and power.

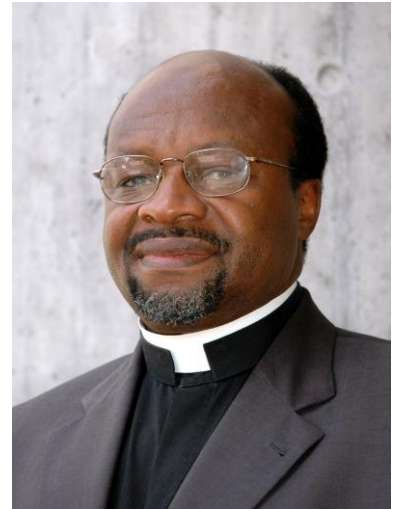
Staalsett strove also to place his heavy commitment to matters of peace and human rights under the communion rubric. He actively supported the struggle of SWAPO, the Namibian liberation movement and human rights efforts in Ethiopia and Eritrea, in El Salvador and Guatemala. He also developed strong links with other Christian World Communions and with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity.

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Per Vokso, p. 509-514

## 7. Ishmael Noko

Country of origin: Zimbabwe  
Date of birth: 29.10.1943  
Period of mandate: 1994-2010

Short biography: Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, the son of a pastor, is the first African General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). Ordained pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, in 1972, he has several years of experience as a university lecturer in theology, and has served in the LWF since 1982. Dr Noko studied theology at the University of South Africa, in Pretoria, and at the University of Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal. He completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1971, majoring in systematic theology, church history and biblical studies. After being ordained in 1972, he studied for a Master's degree in Canada at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He completed the degree in 1974 with a thesis on the "Communion of Saints from the African Perspective."



From 1974 to 1977, Dr Noko studied at McGill University in Quebec and earned a Ph.D. with his doctoral thesis on "The Concept of God in Black Theology: An Appreciation of God as Liberator and Reconciler." During his studies in Canada, Dr Noko worked as a parish pastor and university lecturer. In late 1977, he accepted a lectureship at the University of Botswana where, two years later, he was appointed as head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies. He also served for three years as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. In May 1982, Dr Noko was called from the University of Botswana to join the LWF Department of World Service where he worked for refugee services related to churches, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) [predecessor of the African Union – AU] and other organizations. As chairperson of one of its subcommittees, he participated in several OAU Ministerial Council meetings and was an observer at several OAU summits. On 1 October 1987, Dr Noko became Director of the LWF Department of Church Cooperation. In this position, he was responsible for programs in the areas of theological education, mission, youth, and the various regional desks. Following a major restructuring of the LWF in 1990, he continued as Director of the new Department for Mission and Development. Following election by the LWF Council in June 1994, Dr Noko assumed the position of LWF General Secretary on 1 November 1994. The Council re-elected him, at its meeting in September 2004, for another seven-year term. As LWF General Secretary, Dr Noko is the Chief Executive Officer of the entire organization headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, with a staff of 70 persons from 20 different nations. There are also some 40 international staff members and consultants, who work alongside some 5,200 local staff in the Department for World Service country and regional programs, as well as associate programs. In addition to administrative responsibilities, Dr Noko is the chief ecumenical officer of the LWF; headed the LWF process leading to the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification with the Roman Catholic Church; relates to Christian world communions and communities of other religious traditions; and, is responsible for international affairs in contact with governments and political leaders. In recent years, he has had audiences with numerous heads of state and government.

The challenges faced by the first LWF General Secretary from the southern hemisphere were many: arrangements for the Ninth Assembly, scheduled for Hong Kong in July 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of the LWF, the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in October 1999 which led to a momentous historical and ecumenical benchmark, inter-Lutheran unity, as well as numerous zones of conflicts where his mediation gift was precious.

Dr Noko is a recipient of five honorary doctorates from the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, Canada; the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, USA; Concordia College, North Dakota, USA; California Lutheran University, USA; and Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, Chennai, India; as well as a recipient of the 1995 Wittenberg Award from the Luther Institute, Washington DC. On 7 October 2000, he was made an honorary citizen of Slavkov (Austerlitz) in the Czech Republic. He also serves as president of the Inter-Faith Action for Peace in Africa (IFAPA), a conflict resolution and peace building initiative incorporating the continent's seven faith traditions. In 2010, a honorary doctoral degree from Tumaini University, Makumira in Tanzania was also attributed to Dr Noko.

More to read in the book: *From Federation to Communion: The History of the Lutheran World Federation*, by Norman A. Hjelm, p. 515-471



## 8. Martin Junge

Country of origin: Concepción, Chile  
Date of birth: 21.08.1961  
Period of mandate: 2010-



**Short biography:** Rev. Martin Junge is the first Latin American general secretary of The Lutheran World Federation (LWF). He was elected by the LWF Council at its 26 October 2009 meeting in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva, Switzerland, and assumed office on 1 November 2010. Junge was born in Chile in 1961 and completed his primary and secondary education in Concepción. Following his confirmation, in the early years of the military dictatorship, Rev. Junge felt a call to the ministry. The spiritual commitment of Lutherans he witnessed during the dictatorship played a decisive role in this decision as did his active participation in the Lutheran congregation in Concepción, where he was also the organist. Junge studied Evangelical theology at Georg-August University in Göttingen, Germany, from 1980 to 1986. He returned to Chile in 1987 to complete his internship and was ordained in 1989. His second theological exam thesis was titled “Lutheran understanding of original sin—catechetical challenges in the Latin American context.” Following his ordination, he served from 1989 to 1994 and 1994 to 2000 as pastor of two congregations in Santiago with extremely different social and cultural backgrounds. His first involvement with the LWF was through his selection by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELC) as a steward to the 1990 Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil. He participated actively in regional leadership conferences and was an IELC delegate to the LWF Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong, China. In 1996, Rev. Junge was elected president of the IELC. One of his most significant achievements as church president was to stabilize the IELC after a severe leadership crisis, especially by launching, in 1999, a ten-year strategic plan called “Ten Years to Grow.” He also participated in ecumenical dialogues at the national level that led to the signature of the “Mutual Recognition of Baptism” in 1999 by the Roman Catholic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Anglican Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Reformed churches, the Methodist Church and several Pentecostal churches. Under his leadership, the IELC played a decisive role in the 1999 passing of the act granting equal legal status to religious organizations in Chile. He was instrumental in the organization of the interfaith Te Deum service celebrated jointly by the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities every year at the Roman Catholic cathedral of Santiago to commemorate Chilean National Day. Through his active participation in a civil society committee, a symbolically important victory was won with the transformation of a former detention and torture center of the military regime into a “Park of Peace” (Parque por la Paz).

In 2000, Rev. Junge was appointed LWF Area Secretary for Latin America and the Caribbean at the Department for Mission and Development. In his nine years as area secretary, he greatly strengthened regional processes and relationships between LWF member churches in Latin America and developed a planning tool for sketching future processes in the region. He also took up the crucial issues of neoliberal globalization and illegitimate external debt. He was instrumental in the publication of a seminal work in 2008 titled *Not Just Numbers – Examining the Legitimacy of Foreign Debts* – (LWF Documentation 53), which was presented at the International Symposium on Illegitimate Debt held in Oslo, Norway, in October 2008. His constructive role as an adviser in

processes of mediation and institutional strengthening has received the recognition of both churches and agencies not only in Latin America but also in other LWF regions. Rev. Junge holds a Diploma of Advanced Studies in the Management of Not-for-Profit Organizations from the Management Institute of the University of Fribourg in Switzerland.

*Prepared by the LWF Office for Communication Services*  
July 2011