

## **Reverend Martin Junge - General Secretary-Elect of the Lutheran World Federation**

[Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile]

Rev. Martin Junge is the first Latin American to be elected General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The LWF Council elected him on 26 October 2009 at its meeting in Chavannes-de-Bogis near Geneva, Switzerland.

Junge was born in Chile in 1961 and completed his primary and secondary education in Concepción. It was after his confirmation, in the early years of the military dictatorship that Rev. Junge decided he was called to the ministry. A decisive factor in this decision was the spiritual commitment of Lutherans he witnessed during the dictatorship and his work within his Lutheran congregation in Concepción, where he was also the organist.

He studied Evangelical theology at the 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 thesis for his second theological exam was on the “Lutheran understanding of original sin—catechetical challenges in the Latin American context.”

Following ordination, from 1989 to 1994 and 1994 to 2000, he served as a pastor in Santiago in two congregations with extremely contrasting social and cultural backgrounds.

His first involvement with the LWF was as a steward from his church to the 1990 Eighth Assembly in Curitiba, Brazil. He participated actively in regional leadership conferences and was delegated by his church to participate in the LWF Ninth Assembly in Hong Kong, China.

In 1996, Rev. Junge was elected President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile. His most significant achievement as church president was to stabilize the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile 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.

Another key achievement in this period was the passing in 1999 of the act granting equal legal status to religious organizations in Chile, in which the church played a decisive role. 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 the Chilean National Day. Last but not least, through his participation in the “Churches 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.

Martin Junge and his wife Marietta Ruhland have two children.

*[LWF- November 2009]*

