

Anne Burghardt is first woman to lead Lutheran World Federation

by [Emily McFarlan Miller](#) in the [July 28, 2021](#) issue



(Photo by Erik Peinar)

The Lutheran World Federation has elected the first woman to head its global communion of churches.

Anne Burghardt, an Estonian theologian, was chosen on June 19 by the LWF Council as the next general secretary of the federation, which includes 148 denominations in the Lutheran tradition from around the globe.

Burghardt, 45, currently serves as head of development for the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church's Institute of Theology. She is also an adviser to the church for international and ecumenical relations and a governing board member of the Conference of European Churches, according to the LWF.

In addition to being the first woman, her election makes her the first pastor from Central and Eastern Europe to lead the LWF.

Burghardt previously served as study secretary for ecumenical relations at the LWF Geneva Communion Office and coordinated content for the LWF Assembly in Windhoek, Namibia, and the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, both in 2017.

She studied theology at the University of Tartu in Estonia, at Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, in Germany, and at Humboldt University in Berlin. She has a master's degree in theology and is currently finishing a PhD in the field of Orthodox liturgics.

Burghardt will take office as general secretary in November. She succeeds Martin Junge, who has led the LWF for 11 years.

The Lutheran World Federation represents more than 77 million Lutherans in 99 countries, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. The LWF Council elects a general secretary to a seven-year term. —Religion News Service