

Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke

Oberkirchenrat Norbert Denecke has been the executive secretary of the Hanover-based German National Committee of the Lutheran World Federation (GNC/LWF) since 2004, as well as the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Germany (VELKD) coordinator for international relations.

Denecke's studies took him to Bethel und Hamburg, and, more importantly, Rome, where he studied at the Waldensian Faculty of theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Italy (ELCI) between 1982 and 1983. While a student, he obtained a post as assistant to the dean of the faculty and thus had his first contact with the Lutheran World Federation by taking part in preparations for the LWF European Church Leadership Conference in Naples.

Following further studies in Göttingen and completion of his first theological examination, he began his pastoral internship at a Brunswick congregation, under the bishop of Wolfenbüttel. He continued his internship in Florence and then Venice, thanks in part to a grant from the GNC/LWF to accompany the congregations in the work of ecumenical dialogue. After completing his second theological examination, he became pastor of the Oker Martin Luther congregation in Gosslar, in 1989.

In 1995 he moved back to Italy—this time with his wife and son—and took over as pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Milan. He was actively involved in the creation of the Council of Christian Churches of Milan, of which he later became the president. Because of his extensive ecumenical contacts, he was placed in charge of relations with the Catholic Church following his election as vice-deacon of the ELCI. He was thus able to accompany from an Italian perspective the process that culminated in the signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. He was a regular guest at of the Ecumenical Commission of the Catholic Conference of Italian Bishops and on several occasions accompanied then LWF president Bishop Dr Christian Krause at his discussions with the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity.

As executive secretary GNC/LWF, Denecke deals especially with coordinating the collaboration between German Lutheran churches and the LWF in Geneva. The German National Committee of the LWF is assisting the LWF and the host church in preparing the Eleventh Assembly.

Hanover, 13 July 2010