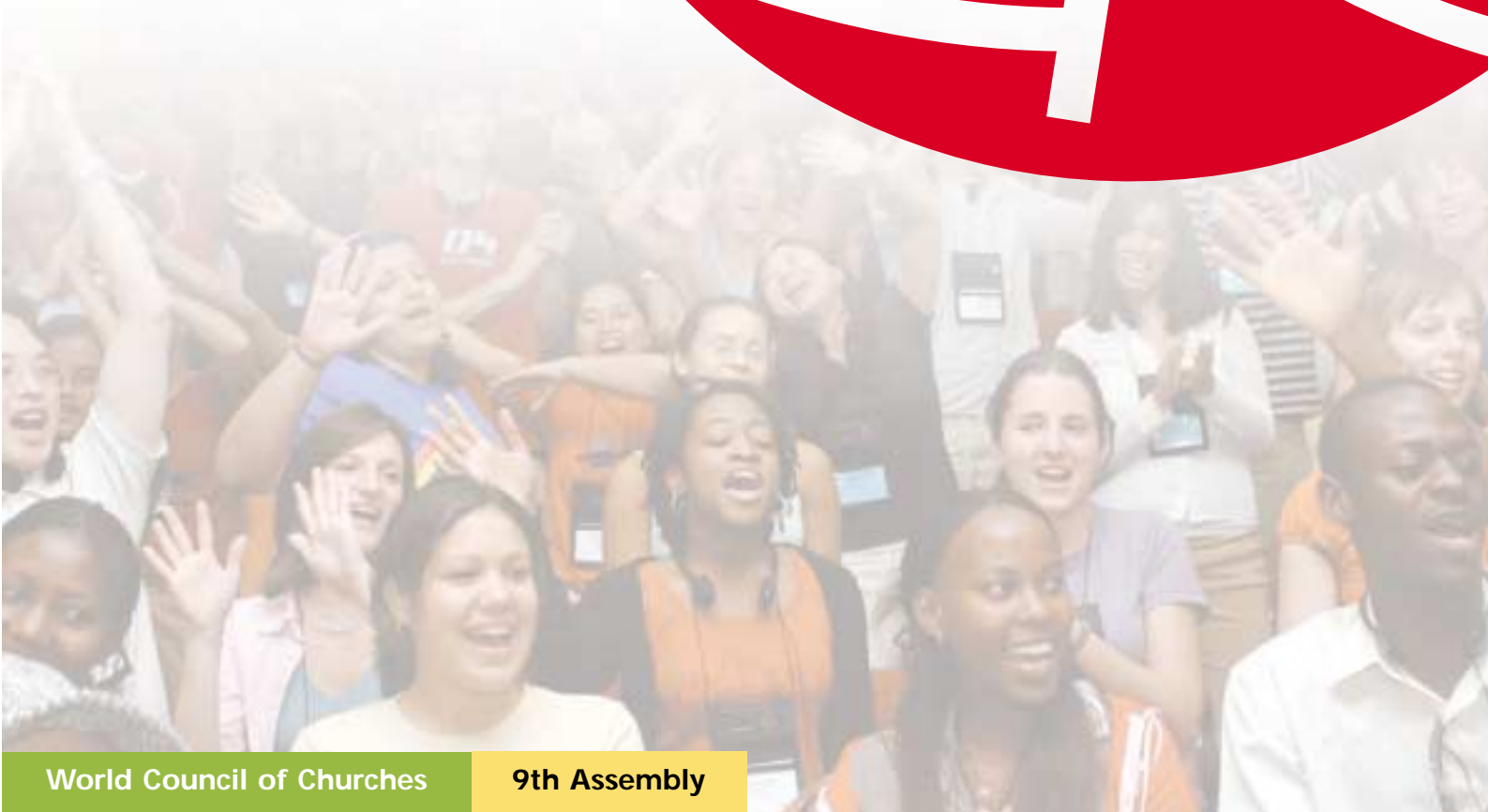


**World Council of Churches  
9th Assembly  
Porto Alegre, 2006**

A review in words  
and images





## Message from the general secretary

In many ways the 9th Assembly of the WCC, which gathered over 4,000 people from churches throughout the world, heralded a new era in ecumenical history, to be marked by increasing attention to the spiritual strength of ecumenism along with the institutional concerns of the ecumenical movement. Some of the Assembly's most inspiring and important outcomes are outlined in this brochure.

The support of the churches and many ecumenical organizations in prayer and through their work in Porto Alegre helped to make the Assembly a joyous and meaningful gathering for the entire ecumenical family, and for this we express our gratitude.

Work has begun to review the Assembly mandate and to consult with member churches and partners in developing a programmatic agenda that will engage the churches in working together and in finding ever more ways to express their visible unity in Christ.

The reports and statements adopted by the Assembly as well as many news stories and testimonies from the participants are available in text and image on the Assembly website ([www.wcc-assembly.info](http://www.wcc-assembly.info)). The official report of the Assembly will be published in November 2006.

The task of ensuring that the spirit of the 9th Assembly is articulated by a clear, responsive and engaging agenda remains a heavy burden on the leadership elected in Porto Alegre. We look forward to your continued prayers and the commitment of the member churches and partners in the coming months and years.

**God, in your grace,  
transform the world!**

**Samuel Kobia,**  
WCC general secretary



The 9th Assembly approved a substantial change in WCC priorities and culture, and agreed to give renewed attention to spirituality, ecumenical formation, global justice and prophetic witness.

The 9th Assembly met in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14-23 February 2006, and gathered over 4,000 participants, including 691 delegates from the 348 member churches of the WCC, and representatives and observers from other churches, organizations and movements. It set a new agenda for the WCC's church and ecumenical relationships in the coming period, agreed on several major programmatic initiatives for the fellowship, and elected a new top governing body to lead the organization into its new mandate.

The Assembly was the first to be held in Latin America since the Council's creation in 1948, and the host churches from Brazil and the broader region were actively involved in the event. The rich daily prayer life of the gathering was combined with Sunday worship in local Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal and Orthodox congregations.

### A new constitution for a new culture

During the first week of the Assembly, delegates adopted a substantially revised Constitution and Rules that move the WCC to decision-making based on consensus and that amend membership criteria. The reforms stem in particular from concerns articulated by Orthodox member churches, and aim to strengthen participation of churches from diverse cultures and traditions.

### Church unity

Addressing the core issues of Christian unity, the Assembly agreed on a new text, "Called to be the One Church," and urged that the WCC and its member churches give priority to questions of unity, catholicity, baptism and prayer. The delegates called for renewed efforts to manifest visible church unity that would allow the ecumenical movement to offer to the world the "coherent, grace-filled spiritual message of Christianity".

The Assembly pointed to ways in which collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church, which is not a member of the WCC, and with Pentecostal churches could be reinforced in the coming period. Delegates agreed to develop ways of working with other church groupings that "improve cooperation and coherence of message" of the various ecumenical bodies and organizations.

Following an appeal from the general secretary, the Assembly supported a proposal to "explore the feasibility of a structure for WCC assemblies" that could be linked to global meetings of other church bodies in the coming years.

### Youth participation

For the first time, young adults appointed by the churches participated in all Assembly committee work, and delegates urged steps to strengthen active involvement of youth (under 30 years) in the life and work of the Council. The Assembly endorsed proposals to create a special body to represent young adults in the decision-making and leadership of the Council.





### Programme priorities

Taking account of the rapidly evolving church and social context, and faced with a decline in income, the delegates agreed to focus future WCC work on a limited number of core issues and urged the WCC to “claim a clearer and stronger public profile in its witness to the world”.

“The WCC should do less, do it well, in an integrated, collaborative and interactive approach,” said the Rev. Dr Walter Altmann (Evangelical Lutheran Church of Brazil), moderator of the programme guidelines committee which formulated the proposals. Calling for a strengthened theological basis for all areas of activity, the delegates also pointed to the need for comprehensive planning and communication strategies “to build engagement and ownership by the churches”.

The programme priorities fall within one or other of four areas of engagement: unity, spirituality and mission; ecumenical formation focusing on youth in particular; global justice; and bringing a credible voice and prophetic witness to the world. The Assembly affirmed that the WCC should expand its work on alternatives to economic globalization, deepening the theological and analytical grounding of this work, and sharing “practical, positive approaches from the churches”.

### Churches seeking peace

The mid-term of the WCC’s Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) was celebrated at the Assembly – which received messages from three Nobel Peace Prize-winners – and the delegates recommended that the WCC move towards an international ecumenical peace convocation. A candlelight walk for peace was held in central Porto Alegre to launch the 2006 Latin American annual focus for the DOV.

### Public issues

The Assembly took action on several issues of international concern. Delegates approved statements on the protection of vulnerable populations; terrorism, counter-terrorism and human rights; nuclear disarmament; the Latin American region; water for life; and the reform of the UN. Responding to widespread intercommunal and inter-religious violence related to caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed, the Assembly voiced its concern for mutual respect, responsibility and dialogue with people of other faiths. Delegates also expressed grave concern about the humanitarian crisis in Northern Uganda.



Assembly delegates and other participants gathered for opening prayer in the gigantic worship tent.



The first of three days of ecumenical conversations began, as participants gathered in diverse groups for lively conversations on 22 different issues.



At the mid-point of the ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence, delegates heard eloquent pleas to end violence and work for economic justice.



14 feb ▲

15 feb ▼

16 feb ▲

17 feb ▲

18 feb ▲

WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia and central committee moderator Catholicos Aram I addressed the Assembly.



The morning featured a visit from the president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The afternoon brought an address by the Most Rev. Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, at a plenary session on Christian identity and religious plurality.

# God, in your grace,

Dios, en tu gracia, transforma el mundo

Deus, em

In deiner Gnade, Gott, verwandle die

## A grace-filled gathering

**God, in your grace, through the love of your Son Jesus Christ, and the breath of the Holy Spirit, you create and sustain our universe. Together we turn to you in prayer, for it is you who unite us.**

Thousands of Christians from many nations gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, for the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. For 10 days they prayed, discussed and reflected on the Assembly theme, "God, in your grace, transform the world."

The 691 voting delegates, representing 348 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican, United and other WCC member churches, made decisions that will guide the work of the Council in years to come. They adopted a consensus method of decision-making, aimed at ensuring full participation by Council members.

Prayer shaped the life of this Assembly, as participants gathered daily in the worship tent and in small Bible study groups. They sang and prayed in the traditions and languages of various churches and cultures.

Latin American cultures enhanced the flavour of many Assembly events, especially during a day devoted to dramatic presentations of the history of the region and its churches. A new feature, the Mutirão (a Brazilian word meaning 'coming together'), provided space for exploring a variety of issues and concerns.

Young people played a highly visible role at this Assembly, joining in the calls for economic justice, an end to violence and greater inter-religious understanding – and above all, for the visible unity of the church of Jesus Christ.



Assembly participants celebrated Latin America Day with food, music, dancing and a dramatic presentation.

Young people continued to make their voices heard in ways that will have an impact on ecumenism long after the Assembly.



Getting down to business, delegates heard committee reports and adopted the new consensus method of decision-making.



19 feb ▲

20 feb ▼

21 feb ▲

22 feb ▼

23 feb ▲



In a plenary on church unity Archbishop Desmond Tutu reminded delegates that all are loved by God and are part of God's family.



A candle-light walk for peace drew crowds to downtown Porto Alegre.

# transform the world

tua graça, transforma o mundo

Welt Transforme le monde, Dieu, dans ta grâce



The 9th Assembly was a colourful and joyful affair, with the sights and sounds reflecting the diversity of the ways in which God works to transform all that is.

## Seeking the visible unity of the churches

We, the delegates to the Ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, give thanks to the Triune God, Father; Son and Holy Spirit, who has brought our churches into living contact and dialogue. We reaffirm that “the primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship expressed in worship and in common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe”. Our continuing divisions are real wounds to the body of Christ, and God’s mission in the world suffers.

Churches in the fellowship of the WCC remain committed to one another on the way towards full visible unity. Therefore the 9th Assembly calls upon the World Council of Churches to continue to facilitate deep conversations among various churches. We also invite all of our churches to engage in the hard task of giving a candid account of the relation of their own faith and order to the faith and order of other churches. Each church is asked to articulate the judgements that shape, and even qualify, its relationship to the others. The honest sharing of commonalities, divergences, and differences will help all churches to pursue the things that make for peace and build up the common life.

Extracts from the text on ecclesiology “Called to be the One Church” adopted by the 9th Assembly.

## A new leadership for a new mandate

The Assembly elected a 150-person central committee, which serves as the main decision-making body of the Council between assemblies. The new committee counts 63 women and 22 young adults. The Assembly also appointed eight presidents to represent the Council in their respective regions.

The central committee elected **Rev. Dr Walter Altmann** (Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil) as moderator, and as vice-moderators **Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima** (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople) and **Rev. Dr Margaretha M. Hendriks-Ririmasse** (Protestant Church in the Moluccas) (Indonesia).

The eight WCC presidents are:

His Holiness Abune Paulos, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

Rev. Prof. Dr Simon Dossou, Protestant Methodist Church in Benin

Rev. Dr Soritua Nababan, Protestant Christian Batak Church (Indonesia)

Rev. Dr Ofelia Ortega, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba

Rev. Dr Bernice Powell Jackson, United Church of Christ (USA)

Mr John Taroanui Doom, Maōhi Protestant Church (French Polynesia)

Archbishop Dr Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania

Dr Mary Tanner, Church of England



Rev. Dr Walter Altmann



Rev. Dr Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse



Metropolitan Prof. Dr Gennadios of Sassima



## Message of the WCC 9th Assembly: An invitation to prayer

Sisters and brothers,  
we greet you in Christ.  
As representatives of churches  
from all the world's regions,  
we gather in Porto Alegre,  
Brazil, meeting in the first  
decade of the third millennium,  
in the first assembly of the  
World Council of Churches  
held in Latin America. We have  
been invited here to join in a  
*feita da vida*, the feast of life.  
We are praying, reflecting on  
the scriptures, struggling and  
rejoicing together in our unity  
and diversity, and seeking to  
listen carefully to one another  
in the spirit of consensus.  
Meeting in February 2006, we  
are made aware by Assembly  
participants of cries arising  
daily in their home countries  
and regions due to disasters,  
violent conflicts and conditions  
of oppression and suffering.  
Yet we are also empowered by  
God to bear witness to  
transformation in personal  
lives, churches, societies and  
the world as a whole.  
Specific challenges and calls to  
action are being communicated  
to the churches and the world  
in the reports and decisions of  
the Assembly, such as: the  
quest for Christian unity; our  
mid-term call to recommitment  
to the Decade to Overcome  
Violence (2001-2010);  
discernment of prophetic and  
programmatic means to  
achieve global economic  
justice; engagement in inter-  
religious dialogue; full inter-  
generational participation of all  
women and men, and common  
statements addressing the  
churches and the world on  
public issues.



The theme of this Ninth Assembly is a prayer, **"God, in your grace, transform the world"**.  
In prayer our hearts are transformed, and so we offer our message as prayer:

God of grace,  
together we turn to you in prayer, for it is you who unite us:  
you are the one God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - in whom we believe,  
you alone empower us for good,  
you send us out across the earth in mission and service in the name of Christ.  
We confess before you and all people:  
We have been unworthy servants.  
We have misused and abused the creation.  
We have wounded one another by divisions everywhere.  
We have often failed to take decisive action against environmental destruction,  
poverty, racism, caste-ism, war and genocide.  
We are not only victims but also perpetrators of violence.  
In all this, we have fallen short as disciples of Jesus Christ  
who in his incarnation came to save us and teach us how to love.  
Forgive us, God, and teach us to forgive one another.  
**God, in your grace, transform the world.**  
God, hear the cries of all creation,  
the cries of the waters, the air, the land and all living things;  
the cries of all who are exploited, marginalized, abused and victimized,  
all who are dispossessed and silenced, their humanity ignored,  
all who suffer from any form of disease, from war  
and from the crimes of the arrogant who hide from the truth,  
distort memory and deny the possibility of reconciliation.  
God, guide all in seats of authority towards decisions of moral integrity.  
**God, in your grace, transform the world.**  
We give thanks for your blessings and signs of hope that are already present in the world,  
in people of all ages and in those who have gone before us in faith;  
in movements to overcome violence in all its forms, not just for a decade but for always;  
in the deep and open dialogues that have begun both within our own churches and with  
those of other faiths in the search for mutual understanding and respect;  
in all those working together for justice and peace -  
both in exceptional circumstances and every day.  
We thank you for the good news of Jesus Christ, and the assurance of resurrection.  
**God, in your grace, transform the world.**  
By the power and guidance of your Holy Spirit, O God,  
may our prayers never be empty words  
but an urgent response to your living Word -  
in nonviolent direct action for positive change,  
in bold, clear, specific acts of solidarity, liberation, healing and compassion,  
readily sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.  
Open our hearts to love and to see that all people are made in your image,  
to care for creation and affirm life in all its wondrous diversity.  
Transform us in the offering of ourselves so that we may be your partners in  
transformation  
to strive for the full, visible unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ,  
to become neighbours to all,  
as we await with eager longing the full revelation of your rule  
in the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.  
**God, in your grace, transform the world.**  
In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.



## WCC 9th Assembly information and resources

### 9th Assembly website ([www.wcc-assembly.info](http://www.wcc-assembly.info))

The official website in five languages makes available all the main documents and final versions of the committee reports, videos, photos, publications, prayer and other resources from the Assembly.

### Official Report of the 9th Assembly

Available in November 2006 from WCC Publications.

### From Harare to Porto Alegre

"From Harare to Porto Alegre" is the report of the activities and dialogue of the WCC between the 8th Assembly in 1998 in Zimbabwe and the 9th Assembly in 2006.

### Assembly Programme Book

Within the pages of the Programme Book are several key texts and documents used by delegates and other participants attending the 9th Assembly.

All these materials as well as news and features from the event are available on: [www.wcc-assembly.info](http://www.wcc-assembly.info)



## Help the WCC continue its work

The WCC needs your support to continue its work. Please consider making a financial contribution to the WCC. Take a few minutes and make an online donation, or send your gift to the WCC (check with your church or national council of churches to coordinate transfers).

Donate online using our website:

<http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/donations/index-e.html>

Alternatively, donate directly to the WCC bank account.

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## The World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches promotes Christian unity in faith, witness and service for a just and peaceful world. An ecumenical fellowship of churches founded in 1948, today the WCC brings together over 340 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 550 million Christians, and works closely with the Roman Catholic Church.



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