



Transforma mundo

World Council of Churches 9th Assembly |

Porto Alegre, 15 February 2006

#2

Today in Porto Alegre



Down to work

11:00-12:30 The opening business plenary today appoints the members of the Assembly committees, and establishes the agenda of the public issues committee. Constitutional matters to be decided at the Assembly are introduced.

15:00 The moderator's address is on the theme of the assembly, "God in your grace, transform the world." Catholicos Aram I (Armenian Apostolic Church, See of Cilicia) was elected as moderator of the WCC central committee in 1991.

17:00 The general secretary, the Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia (Methodist Church of Kenya), gives his first report to the WCC Assembly since assuming office in 2004. The report focuses on the theme of "Celebrating Life – a festa da vida."

Number
of the
day

3,838

registered Assembly participants
(excluding staff and stewards)

Spiritual life

With the prayer "God, in your grace, transform *the world*," today's worship services again focus on *the here and now* as the locus for transformation. The Scripture passages, "Liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1-4; Luke 4: 16-21), symbolized by **broken chains**, evoke Jesus' ministry of good news to the oppressed and healing to the broken-hearted.

Webcasts, texts, photos and more on www.wcc-assembly.info

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God's abundant grace: offering during the the opening prayer

A spiritual Assembly

"An Assembly of the WCC is essentially a spiritual event," commented WCC moderator Catholicos Aram I, welcoming participants at the opening plenary on Tuesday. A gathering of churches on the scale of the 9th Assembly is an opportunity for all to reaffirm their confession of Jesus Christ, and to voice their intention to continue the search for the visible unity of the church. As in all WCC assemblies, the 9th Assembly is grounded in prayer, worship and Bible study. This spiritual life is founded on the Assembly theme, "God, in your Grace, transform the world," which is conceived in

the form of a prayer.

The 9th Assembly will be a "praying Assembly," anticipates the worship committee which has worked for two years preparing the services for Porto Alegre. Participants will gather each morning in the great worship tent for common prayer, drawing on liturgical resources from various cultures, using both ancient and modern texts, exuberant and contemplative. Evening services are led by confessional groups and will follow varied church traditions of vespers services.

Eucharist services may be offered by churches in the university chapel, allowing

participants to celebrate the Lord's Supper, despite the fact that not all Christians can share Communion.

Together with the prayer life, Bible study provides participants a time to read and discuss the Scripture together. In the busy Assembly context, the invitation to read the Bible together is an invitation to be open to one another and to the power of the Holy Spirit. It is a time to discern the signs of God's grace, in our lives, our community and our world. The published Bible study materials, *Springs of Living Water*, will provide the basis for this common reflection.

WCC/Paulino Menezes

By the way...

Feeling at home?

Hospitality becomes a special word for many people at an assembly like this, particularly those for whom it is a new experience, or who have traveled a long way and now find themselves in a quite strange environment.

Every sign of welcome, every gesture of friendship and acceptance, becomes so precious. Afterwards, all of us will be saying how much we appreciated the hospitality from our Brazilian hosts.

Hospitality is likely to be talked about in other senses too. Eucharistic hospitality is one of the most sensitive issues in relations between the churches. Building hospitable communities in response to migration is one of the topics in the Ecumenical Conversations at this Assembly.

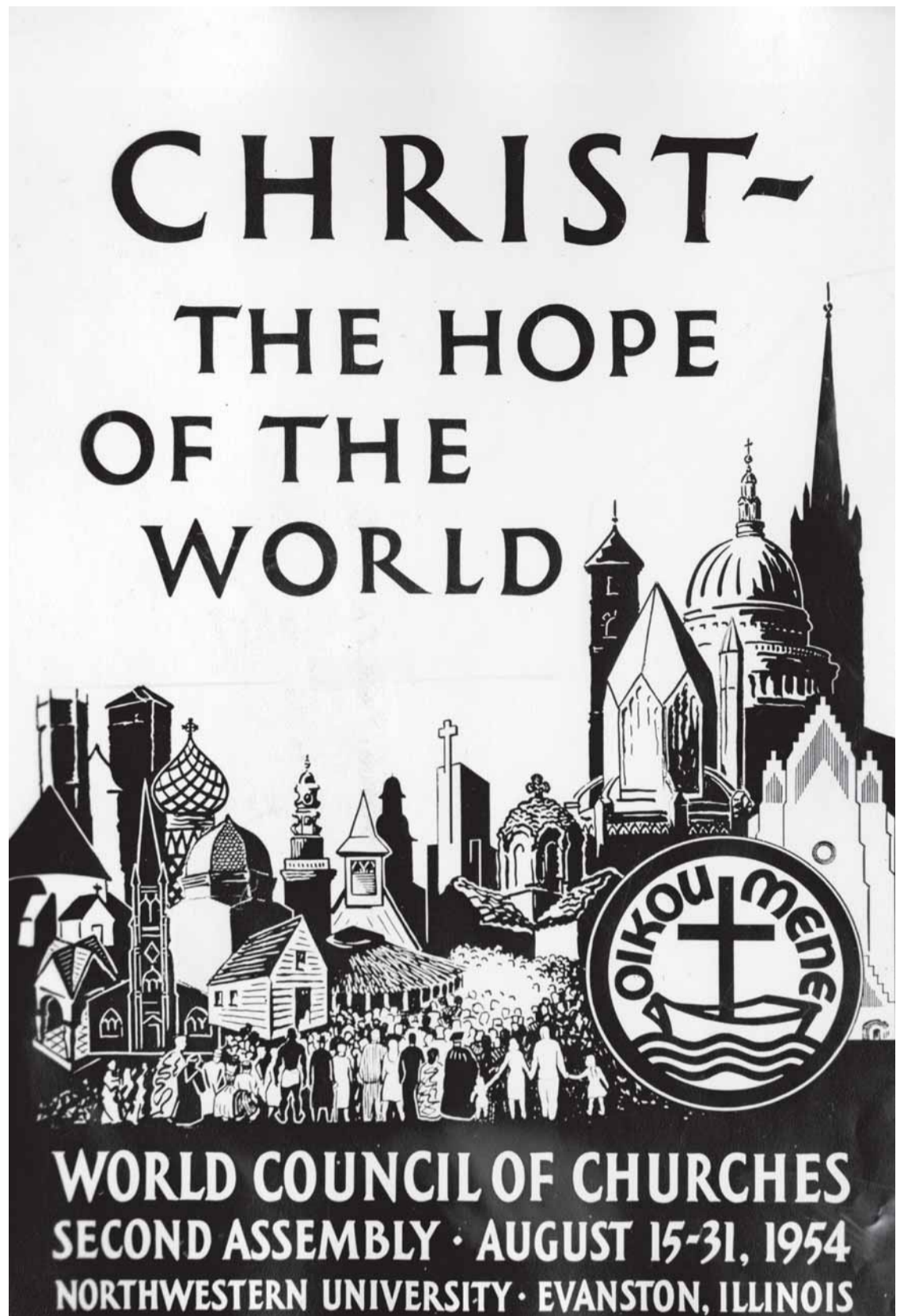
But our understanding - or misunderstanding - of what hospitality involves also underlies one of the biggest items on the WCC agenda over the past decade, which will no doubt be dealt with again in the reports of the moderator and general secretary. This is the relationship between the WCC and the ecumenical movement as a whole. Ever since the reflection process and report *Towards a Common Vision and Understanding of the World Council of Churches* (1997), there has been a clear recognition by the WCC that the ecumenical movement is wider than itself and its own membership. Thus the WCC is but an instrument, albeit the "most privileged" one, of the movement as a whole.

This understanding, however, still leaves the WCC in an awkward position when it comes to "hosting" meetings on, for example, the proposed global Christian Forum or the "reconfiguration" of the ecumenical movement. It is difficult for some of those invited not to feel that they are there as "guests" of the WCC, which as the "host" body is still seen as ultimately in charge of the agenda. However hard and sincerely the WCC argues otherwise, a certain host-guest mentality still seems to prevail on all sides.

Here is where we do well to reflect on our language. Greek friends tell us that their word *xenos*, which today is part of the word *xenophobia* (fear or hatred of strangers or foreigners), originally meant not just "stranger" or even just "guest" but both "guest" and "host." In the time of the Bible and the early church, it indicated that when a visitor was welcomed into a home, host and guest met on equal terms of dignity, status and acceptance. To welcome a stranger, however apparently poor, was the greatest honour. The host's home became the guest's home, and the guest in turn invited the host to enter the experience and view of life that he or she brought.

How can we restore the richness of this understanding of "host-guest" as mutuality in the ecumenical movement? Can languages from traditions and cultures as well as the Greek help here? Meanwhile, it would also be good if in encounters with others every participant here at Porto Alegre could look for opportunities to practise being a true *xenos*, in both of the original senses of the word.

Angelos



WCC in history

When the Council met for its 2nd Assembly, this time in the United States, the gloomy greyness of post World War II reconstruction, the Korean War and the spreading awareness of the Cold War were very much in people's minds. The Assembly theme, in contrast, proclaimed a message of hope and renewal. Delegates met in a world still without colour television!

Bate-papo

Dialogue: The future of Christianity

In today's *Bate-Papo* gathering, the younger generation, represented by Jantine Heuvelink of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, who is a student pastor at the University of the Hague, will meet the older generation, represented by the Rev. Richard Sklba, Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee-Wisconsin, in a half-hour dialogue on the subject of: "Is there a future for Christianity in the 21st Century."

In the *Bate Papo* gatherings, young people will challenge the older generation as to what they have done and, perhaps even more importantly, what they have *not* done to create a better world for all.

Later sessions will be dialogue and questions on other subjects.

Bate-Papo sessions will take place from 12.45 to 13.15 daily, from February 15-22 (except Sunday), in the theatre of building 40.

Consensus Assembly opens for business



Music, drums and drama marked the opening plenary session of the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. Declaring the Assembly open, WCC moderator

Catholicos Aram I remarked that it was the first time an Assembly had been held in Latin America, and referred to the record number of young people attending.

Prayer, Bible study and conversation are integral to the event which, he said, could be described as a "consensus Assembly" because of the new voting procedures.

"This Assembly is essentially a spiritual event," Aram said. "I invite and challenge you to make it such in the authentic sense of the word."

Delegates were greeted ac-

ording to the region from which they came, and guests brought greetings. Bishop Adriel de Souza Maia brought greetings on behalf of Brazilian churches, saying that to host the Assembly was "an honour" for Brazil.

Bishop Julio Holguin, on behalf of Latin American churches, said, "We open our arms and hearts to receive you with the warmth and joy characteristic of our purposes and our churches." He added, "Our greatest desire would have been to come together around the table of the Lord. The ecumenical movement ought to be able to share the gift of grace in each one of us." Delegates applauded his comments.

Greetings were also brought by the vice-mayor of Porto Alegre, Eliseu Santos, and by the Honourable Germano Rigotto, governor of Rio Grande do Sul.

Messages had been received from church leaders unable to be

present at the opening, including the ecumenical patriarch, Bartholomew I; Pope Benedict XVI, whose message was read by Cardinal Walter Kasper; the Archbishop of Canterbury; Dr Rowan Williams, who will travel to the Assembly later this week; Lourdes Saad Oliviera, representing the World YWCA and World Alliance of YMCAs; and the secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan.

The welcome of 31 new member churches into the WCC was followed by an act of recommitment led by Kobia. Those who had attended past Assemblies were recognised, including Philip Potter, a past general secretary who attended the first Assembly in Amsterdam as a young steward.

The plenary closed with a song, "Deus em tua Graca." It was followed by a celebratory prayer service in the Assembly tent.

Messages

Archbishop of Canterbury

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, who will attend the Assembly later in the week, sent a message to the delegates: "I will be praying with you as you meet, using the Assembly theme, 'God, in your grace, transform the world.'

"We keep in mind not just the world that is to be transformed, but the work of this Assembly, the churches we each represent and indeed the future role of the WCC. In doing so, our underlying desire is surely for the combined witness of our churches to keep pace, in this fast-changing and often perplexing world, with what it means to be an effective sign of God's transforming grace."

Pope Benedict XVI

In his message of greeting to the Assembly, Pope Benedict expressed his heartfelt good wishes, and noted that thousands of Christians are joining in the prayer for unity.

"Mindful of our shared baptismal faith in the Triune God," he writes, " (we) seek ways to cooperate ever more effectively in the task of witnessing to God's divine love.

"Assuring you of my spiritual closeness and reaffirming the Catholic Church's intention to continue a solid partnership with the World Council of Churches in its important contribution to the ecumenical movement, I invoke God's abundant blessings of peace and joy upon you all."

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

The Ecumenical Patriarch expressed his regret that he is not able to be present at the Assembly. He offered his fervent prayer "that the Holy Spirit will guide the deliberations at the Assembly and will bestow on all participants in this gathering wisdom, discernment and courage.

"The Ecumenical Patriarchate is committed to the WCC and the ecumenical movement as a whole. It will continue to offer its witness and share the richness of its traditions in the search for unity among Christian churches, in all efforts towards reconciliation and peace and in the protection of creation which is a gift of God entrusted to humanity."

WCC/Paulino Menezes



Welcome to Latin America - Brazilian drama during the opening plenary

Mutirão

Mutirão – what is it?

The *Mutirão* allows the hundreds who are not official delegates to participate in the Assembly. It is designed to enrich the Assembly's programme and strengthen its spiritual life.

The word may seem strange at first to non-Brazilian participants, but for many it is the heart of the WCC Assembly. Think color, diversity, sharing and celebration.

Mutirão is a Brazilian word with Indigenous roots, meaning a meeting place and an opportunity to work together for a common purpose. In Brazil, for example, people in poor communities sometimes "make a *mutirão*" to build a house together. They gather the necessary tools and expertise and work together to realize a concrete objective. At the Assembly the *Mutirão* provides a space for reflection, celebration and exhibits. Churches and ecumenical organizations from around the world will host discussions on a variety of issues. The *Mutirão* will have a Latin American and

Caribbean flavor, with many participants from the region. Youth participation will make this a high-energy part of the Assembly.

The *Mutirão* allows the hundreds who are not official delegates to participate in the Assembly. It is designed to enrich the Assembly's programme and strengthen its spiritual life. Delegates are encouraged to participate in the *Mutirão* and bring their experiences to the decision-making process.

Here is some of what is available for *Mutirão* participants:

- Bible study in English, Portuguese or Spanish, following morning prayer
- Opportunities to observe the plenary sessions, either in the plenary hall or in an overflow area
- Midday (12:45-13:15) con-

versations with an ecumenical leader - *bate-papo* or cultural offerings of music, street theatre, sports or dance

- Workshops on a wide variety of topics - from HIV and AIDS to spirituality to peace in Sudan to liberation theology -13:30-14:45, and during the Assembly business sessions

- Opportunities to learn and share experiences of ecumenism in three sessions of "ecumenical formation"
- More than 100 exhibits located right outside the plenary hall
- Eight "spaces" around campus hosted by the Brazilian churches for women, youth, Indigenous people, children, inter-religious issues, people of African descent and people with disabilities
- A theological café, spon-

- sored by the School of Theology in São Leopoldo, Brazil, featuring daily discussions with some of the theologians present at the Assembly
 - Space for groups wishing to have informal meetings
 - A youth camp for Latin American young people
- Check the 9th Assembly Handbook for a detailed schedule of events, locations and times. Updates to the schedule will appear in the daily newspaper.

Background

Coming together to make a difference

At an orientation session yesterday morning, Assembly participants were briefed on the purpose of the *Mutirão* by local coordinator Rui Bernhard, a pastor in Porto Alegre. He described the *Mutirão* as "an open partnership program in which those who are not delegates will have opportunities to participate" in the life of the Assembly. "One of the wonderful things about the *Mutirão*," he added, "is that it provides opportunities for shared insights to guide our Assembly deliberations."

Must-see exhibits

A wildly diverse array of exhibits awaits delegates and others just outside the plenary hall. Exhibitors range from the Salvation Army and Habitat for Humanity International to the World Student Christian Federation. There are brochures about confirmation training in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. One booth displays icons by contemporary artists. Not far away is a memorial to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. There's a cause for every concerned Christian: tsunami response, reunification of North and South Korea, an end to the occupation of Palestine, and many more. Look for the table displaying five flavours of juice (*suco*, in Portuguese) from Projeto Comunidades Quilombolas, an agricultural project supported by the Lutheran Foundation of Diaconia in Porto Alegre. Unfortunately, the bottles of juice are not for sale.



Mutirão scenes:
above left, Bolivian dancers; right, exhibitors; below, visitors browsing in the exhibition hall



Vanishing seeds and water

Many people in the world do not have easy access to clean water for drinking and washing. A growing trend toward privatisation of water also threatens the global supply of this essential resource.

"This is an issue of priority for Church World Service," said Lynda M. Selde, a CWS staff member who was helping out yesterday at a display of the Ecumenical Water Network, co-founded by the WCC. To learn more, visit the exhibit or stop by the "Water Tent" – a green tent next to the youth tent – where special water-related events will be held each day.

Protecting native seeds is a cause dear to the heart of Nancy Cardoso Pereira, a minister in the Methodist Church of Brazil, who is eager to introduce visitors to the work of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (Pastoral Land Commission), based in Porto Alegre. Some 300 species of seeds are in danger of extinction in Brazil, she says, including 47 varieties of native corn.

"It's a big problem, not just for Brazil but for farmers all over the world," she says. What are the threats to seeds? Genetic modification and patenting, promoted by Monsanto, DuPont and other multinational companies. Unlike the native varieties, genetically modified seeds don't reproduce. This means farmers must buy new seeds every year – more money for you know who!

Look for the exhibit with the colorful glass jars of peas, beans and corn, and say "yes" to biodiversity.

37% de delegadas mujeres en la 9ª Asamblea

Las delegadas mujeres constituyen el 37% de la Asamblea. Su participación en los debates y las decisiones será seguramente crucial para la igualdad de oportunidades para mujeres y hombres en las iglesias y en el mundo ecuménico.

El número de delegadas mujeres a las Asambleas ha ido en aumento en las últimas décadas. Su contribución ha permitido aumentar la sensibilidad del movimiento ecuménico hacia las cuestiones cruciales que más les conciernen, tanto dentro como fuera de las iglesias.

Pueblos indígenas quieren revertir el silenciamiento de voces originarias

Los representantes indígenas manifiestan que sus culturas y tierras han sido erosionadas lentamente por la cultura hegemónica occidental y por la globalización económica a través del neoliberalismo. También resaltan que sus lenguas están desapareciendo rápidamente.

Para ellos, cabe a las iglesias que históricamente desempeñaron un rol importante en la supresión de las lenguas y culturas indígenas, para "revertir el silenciamiento de nuestras voces originarias" y revitalicen sus lenguas, valores y culturas. Solicitan al CMI que promueva un Año Internacional de Lenguas Indígenas en el ámbito de Naciones Unidas y una Década Ecuménica de Lenguas Indígenas.

Sólo 10 delegados indígenas, de un total de 691 delegados registrados, participarán oficialmente de la 9ª Asamblea. Destacan, además, que a pesar de haber 740 mil indígenas en Brasil, repartidos en 215 naciones, no hay ningún miembro de un pueblo originario brasileño registrado en la Asamblea en sus eventos previos.

Em um mundo pluralizado, Kobia prega importância do diálogo interreligioso

Bispo Frederico Pagura afirma que latino-americanos esperam uma voz de esperança. Bispo Adriel Maia destaca que CMI deve ser "a voz de unidade e de tolerância para a vida".



Pagura: "voz de esperança"

O secretário-geral do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas (CMI), rev. Samuel Kobia, disse ontem, em entrevista à Imprensa internacional, que o abuso da liberdade de imprensa desvaloriza os próprios fundamentos da liberdade, que são o respeito e a responsabilidade. Questionado por um jornalista francês sobre as charges do pro-

feta Maomé, consideradas ofensivas ao Islã, o rev. Kobia afirmou que o fato, sem dúvida, causou um "incêndio" e que agora é preciso que os dois lados – imprensa ocidental e membros do Islã – mais a comunidade internacional cooperem para "apagar o fogo". "A separação entre Igreja e Estado é importante. Contudo, a socieda-

de secular precisa entender como lidar com isto de uma forma respeitosa", disse o secretário-geral do CMI.

Respondendo à pergunta de um jornalista americano, sobre a presença de representantes de outras vozes não-cristãs, Kobia respondeu que o CMI receberá algumas autoridades do mundo muçulmano, judeu e do budismo.

O moderador do CMI, Sua Santidade Aram I, disse que a globalização tornou todos os povos vizinhos. "Não somos mais estranhos – ele disse – precisamos viver como uma comunidade, aceitando nossas diferenças, sem impor nossos valores como normas sobre nossos vizinhos". O patriarca católico-armênio lembrou que esta questão está no centro do diálogo interreligioso.

O bispo metodista brasileiro, Adriel de Souza Maia, presidente do Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs (Conic) – instituição que organiza o evento ao lado do CMI – disse que a 9ª Assembléia está preconizando a globalização da vida e da

justiça. Para Maia, a Assembléia será uma voz de unidade e de tolerância para a vida", fortalecendo o ecumenismo e a união entre as igrejas, que passarão a ser, a partir de agora, o novo paradigma do mundo.

Também participaram da coletiva de Imprensa o bispo Frederico Pagura, presidente do CMI para a América Latina, que afirmou: "entre tantas ameaças de guerra e ameaças imperialistas, os latino-americanos desejam uma voz de esperança".

A presidente do CMI para a África, Agnes Abuom, ressaltou a contribuição das mulheres, especialmente aquelas que vivem em situação de pobreza e sofrem violência em seus direitos, ressaltando, por fim, que as mulheres devem assumir sua posição de liderança também no espaço eclesial.

Nerissa Celestine, da Ilha de Granada nas Índias Ocidentais, destacou como representante dos jovens esperar que o CMI ajude a desenvolver programas ecumênicos que envolvam a juventude.

Mutirão teve início ontem e reúne cardápio variado de apresentações

O cardápio é variado. Você pode assistir a uma apresentação cultural da Igreja Evangélica Luterana da Bolívia e sua dança boliviana ou buscar compreender a experiência comunitária do Movimento Nacional de Catadores de Materiais Recicláveis, que gera renda e trabalho às mulheres. Ou, ainda, aprender sobre os caminhos traçados nos 40 anos das relações entre a Igreja Católica Romana e o Conselho Mundial de Igrejas. Estas foram apenas algumas das apresentações do primeiro dia do Mutirão, mas outras, tão interessantes quanto estas, ainda estão por vir! O dia 15 de fevereiro está repleto de atividades, formando um cardápio variado, para todos os gostos! Eis alguns destaques:

• **Dança dos Índios Kaigang (Comin)**, das 12h45 às 13h15. Confirme o local de apresentação.

• **Crianças de Botswana – performance musical com crianças de rua beneficiadas pelo desenvolvimento do Programa Tsholofelong**, das 12h45 às 13h15, na Avenida Ecumênica.

• **Juventude e globalização, com enfoque na Alca**, das 13h30 às 14h45, no prédio 50, sala 301.

• **Juventude cristã palestina: sonhos de paz e justiça**, das 13h30 às 14h45, no prédio 50, sala 801.

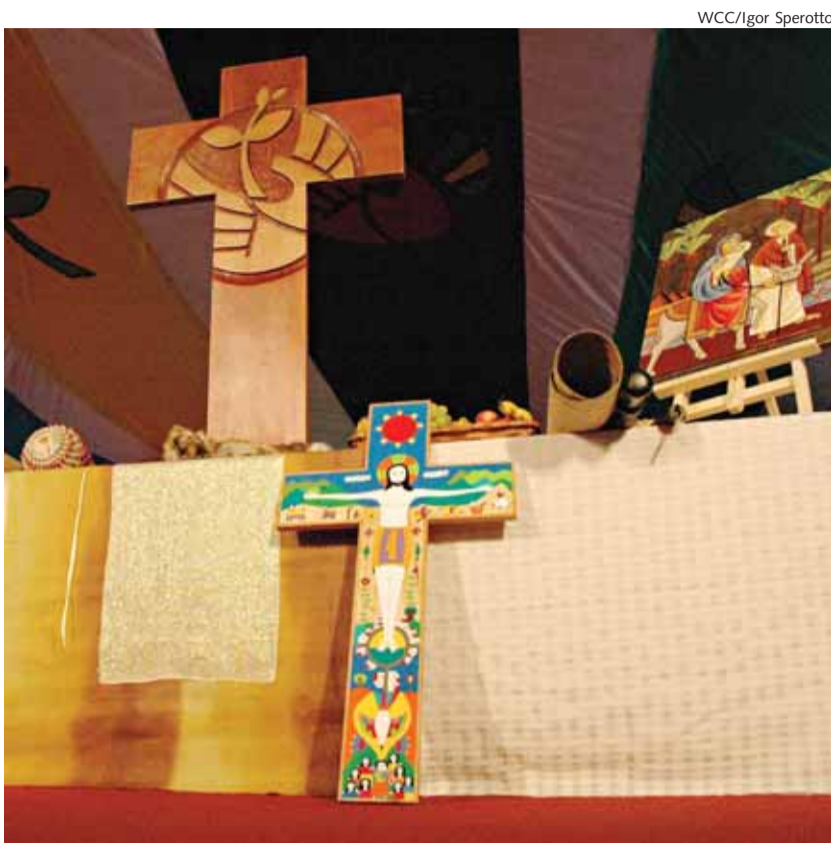
Igreja Evangélica Metodista da Bolívia quer recuperar valores culturais e éticos

"É tempo de valorizar e dimensionar historicamente o caminho percorrido pelos excluídos, pelos ausentes e marginalizados ao longo da história de nossa querida Bolívia", afirma a carta pastoral dirigida ao povo boliviano e ao presidente Evo Morales Ayama, divulgada em 10 de fevereiro pela Igreja Metodista da Bolívia.

A Igreja também ofereceu sua cooperação para participar ativamente dos programas de alfabetização, considerando o ensino dos idiomas nativos, a capacitação de líderes locais e a cooperação dos educadores que levaram esta Campanha adiante.

Outra preocupação da Igreja Metodista diz respeito a uma lei que contemple o reconhecimento da pluralidade religiosa em seu País. Para ele, o novo Governo liderado pelo presidente Morales Ayma traz a esperança de mudanças sociais e culturais. A religião dos povos "merece respeito" e a inclusão do pluralismo religioso na nova Constituição do País, que começará a ser discutida a partir de agosto de 2006, buscará formar uma nação mais democrática e igualitária.

The God of surprises



WCC/Igor Sperotto

Crossing boundaries: gifts in the worship tent

Delegates and others attending the 9th Assembly Tuesday afternoon crowded into the worship tent for the service of opening prayer. In his sermon Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania, a member of the WCC Central Committee, called listeners to wait expectantly for God's ultimate surprise – the transformation of the world. Excerpts from his sermon follow:

The most surprising transformative intervention occurred in human history when the Word of God was incarnated and assumed human nature - not only human spirit but also matter and, thereby, all of creation, since humanity is its crown.

As to what form the transformation of the world will ultimately as-

sume in the future remains a secret of the God of surprises. If human creativity – this divine gift, which we have received – has reserved so many surprises for us, the grace of God holds incomparably more and entirely superb surprises.

The transformative journey of our church communities cannot occur on the basis of criteria occasionally proposed by fashion and vogue, but through the guidance of “the Gospel of grace.” We have in practice often ascertained the substitution of many of God's commandments by the mentality of the world, by a demonic reversal of the evangelical principles. Instead of the primacy of service, we have craved the primacy of authority; instead of the power

of love, the love of the power of this world; instead of respect for others, we have demanded their submission to our opinions and desires.

Woe to us if in the 21st century we again relinquish the initiative for social justice to others, as we have done in past centuries, while we confine ourselves to our opulent rituals, to our usual alliance with the powerful.

Before the challenge of economic globalization, which is solely concerned with broadening the market, while leveling cultural and popular diversities, we are called as Christians to respond with enlightened initiatives for a society of understanding, healing, reconciliation and fraternization, based on respect for each human person and each people, promoting mutual understanding and solidarity throughout the planet.

Even within church circles, in spite of much talk about humility and similar things, people's ways of thinking and patterns of behavior often betray pride and arrogance. Yet humility in Christ reveals the secret of the spiritual radiance and transforming power of the Church.

Finally, both our prayer and our participation in the transformative evolution of the world must take place within an atmosphere of *joy and doxology*. Joy is the distinctive fruit of the Holy Spirit. The radiance of essential love calmly triumphs over sin, pain and contempt. With the joy of selfless love, the joy of the perpetual presence of the Risen Christ in the Holy Spirit, the Church proceeds triumphantly amid the world. And it loses the world when it loses this joy.



Welcome to the continent of contextual theologies, welcome to the contextual reading of the Bible . . .

Bring your contexts, experiences, stories and skills to explore together what the Bible tells us about discerning the signs of grace to become the agents of God's transformation of the world.

The English-speaking group in the Assembly plenary hall will be facilitated by Dr Gerald West, professor of religion and theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa; the Rev. Joy A. Mohan, principal of St Andrew's Theological College in Trinidad and Tobago; Dr Jione Havea of the United Theological College in Australia; and Dr Eleni Kasselouri, educator in the department of psychology at Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece. There will be interpretation into German and French.

The Portuguese group will meet in Salon de Atos of building 4. The facilitators will be Dr Nancy Cardosa and Prof. Milton Schwantes, both of the Methodist University of São Paulo, Brazil, and Prof. Paulo Cesar Ueti Barasioli of the Centre for Biblical Studies in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil.

The Spanish group will meet in the theatre of building 40, with Dr Elizabeth Salazar of the Latin American Theological Commission; Dr Elsa Tamez, translations consultant for the United Bible Societies; and Dr Nestor Oscar Miguez, professor at the Superior Institute of Theological Education in Buenos Aires, will be the facilitators.

All who are not part of the Bible Study Home Groups are welcome to participate.

Gifts from the regions

Symbolic gifts offered in opening prayer

At the service of opening prayer Tuesday afternoon, representatives of the WCC's eight geographical regions offered symbolic gifts. These offerings represented the innumerable blessings bestowed by God and the diversity of responses among the earth's peoples. Regional spokespersons offered explanations of the symbolism.

From Africa - a stone brought from the Turkana region of eastern Kenya, considered by anthropologists and geneticists to be the cradle of humanity. It represents God's grace in creation and providence through the development of humankind.

From Asia - a bell, symbolic of celebration and supplication in prayer. It is representative of the vital interchange between God and the people of God that is essential to the rich traditions of Asian spirituality.

From the Caribbean - sugar cane, source of numerous products in the islands, ranging from popular dishes and drinks to fibres and sources of energy. It is offered as a representation of the strength, the resilience and the sweetness of the Caribbean people.

From Europe - a reindeer calfskin, a gift of the Sami herders, an indigenous people in the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. It represents the Sami's grateful pride in their own identity as their culture finally is affirmed by churches.

From Latin America - a Salvadoran cross, an emblem of suffering under violent regimes, yet a sign of hope for peace, reconciliation and justice. It is a celebration of new life and God's presence in the midst of humble communities.

From the Middle East - a painting representing the only existing Coptic icon from the first millennium. It depicts the holy family's flight into Egypt as described in the second chapter of Matthew's Gospel, a reminder of Christianity's origin in this region.

From North America - symbols of the earth's bounty: sweet grass presented by a representative of the First Nations, and cultivated wheat and corn. These are offered in thanksgiving and in recognition of human responsibility to be stewards of creation.

From the Pacific came a collection of gifts

- Le toga from Polynesia is a woven mat that is used in ceremonies of forgiveness. The tanoa from Fiji in Melanesia, a ceremonial bowl, represents the gathering of people. A stick chart from the Marshall Islands in Micronesia maps the ocean's currents and symbolizes the environmental forces that surround us all.

Things you need to know

Spaces and places at the 9th Assembly

Medical help

On campus, those needing emergency medical assistance should go to the mobile medical unit located outside building 07.

Pastoral care

Life at the Assembly can sometimes be a little overwhelming. Qualified voluntary counselors are available in room 407 of building 40 for those who need to talk.

For any cases of sexual harassment, the solidarity care team can be found in room 413 of building 41.

Information Centre

This can be found on the ground floor of building 50 – near the worship tent. There is a satellite information desk outside the plenary hall.

The university chapel

This may be used for private prayer and meditation when not being used for eucharistic celebrations, which will be announced as information comes to hand.



WCC/Paulino Menezes

Media Centre

Accredited media can visit the Media Centre on the 6th floor of building 40. Daily press conferences will be held each day at 12:45 in the theatre on the ground floor of building 40.

Exhibition hall

This can be found beside the plenary hall in building 41. More than 60 organizations and advocacy groups have stalls providing documents and information on their concerns.

WCC Shop

The shipment from Geneva has arrived! New books join the souvenir T-shirts, caps and mugs on sale at the shop, situated near the entrance to the plenary hall.

Special needs

Any persons with disabilities who have special needs not already cared for should inform the Assembly Information Centre in building 50.

Lunch vouchers

Subsidised participants are invited to come to the second floor of building 11 from 12:30 to 15:00 to collect their lunch vouchers.

These may be presented to the cashiers at the following restaurants on the campus:

Universitario (building 3); Ponte Onzo (building 11); Cantina (building 19); and Panorama (building 41).

Participants paying for their own meals are also welcome to eat at these venues.

Overflow space

For those not authorised to enter the plenary hall, there are two overflow areas where they may follow the plenary sessions - next to the plenary hall for Portuguese speakers and in the theatre in building 40 in English.

Announcements

How did you do on the quiz?

The daily quiz, with free wristbands to the first 1,000 people who go to the exhibit with their answers, continues today. The programme is jointly sponsored by ACT International, ECLOF, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, the Ecumenical Water Network and the WCC's economic justice programme.

Yesterday's quiz on HIV and AIDS provided some surprising answers for those not quite 'in the know.' Today's quiz centres on "human and natural disasters" and people's reactions to them. Quiz forms are available from stand number 18 in the exhibition hall.

Mutirão schedule changes: Thursday 16th

The workshop on "HIV and AIDS: promoting and supporting a leadership role for pastors, ministers and priests" (see Handbook, page M14, #56) will now take place in the auditorium of building 11.

The workshop on "Wider ecumenism – a promise or a threat?" (see Handbook, page M15, #77) has been moved to the auditorium of building 7.

Measures for peace in Palestine/Israel

Some 20 WCC member churches and related organizations have now taken action on morally responsible economic measures for peace in Palestine/Israel. Representatives of Middle Eastern and other member churches are invited to a dinner forum on the issue at 20:00 on Monday, 20th February, in the Ipanema Room at the Holiday Inn. Take Bus 6 from the Assembly. Please confirm in the box marked Dinner Forum, room 509, building 40, or leave a telephone message for Jonathan Frerichs at 3378-2727 (Room 217).

As histórias que a Assembléia conta...



WCC/Paulino Menezes



WCC/Igor Sperotto



WCC/Paulino Menezes



World Council of Churches
9th Assembly Newspaper
"Transforma O Mundo"

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