



Transforma mundo

World Council of Churches 9th Assembly |

Porto Alegre, 23 February 2006

#9

Final day in Porto Alegre



09:15 Plenary session

11:00 Plenary session

14:15 Tree-planting ceremony behind building 15 (see below)

15:00 Plenary and close

17:00 Closing prayers

18:45 Meeting of Central Committee

Special announcement

14:15 There will be a tree-planting ceremony to commemorate the 9th Assembly with representatives of the Brazilian churches, PUC and the WCC general secretaries, past and present. All are welcome.

Number
of the
day

2013?

Possible date
of the WCC 10th Assembly

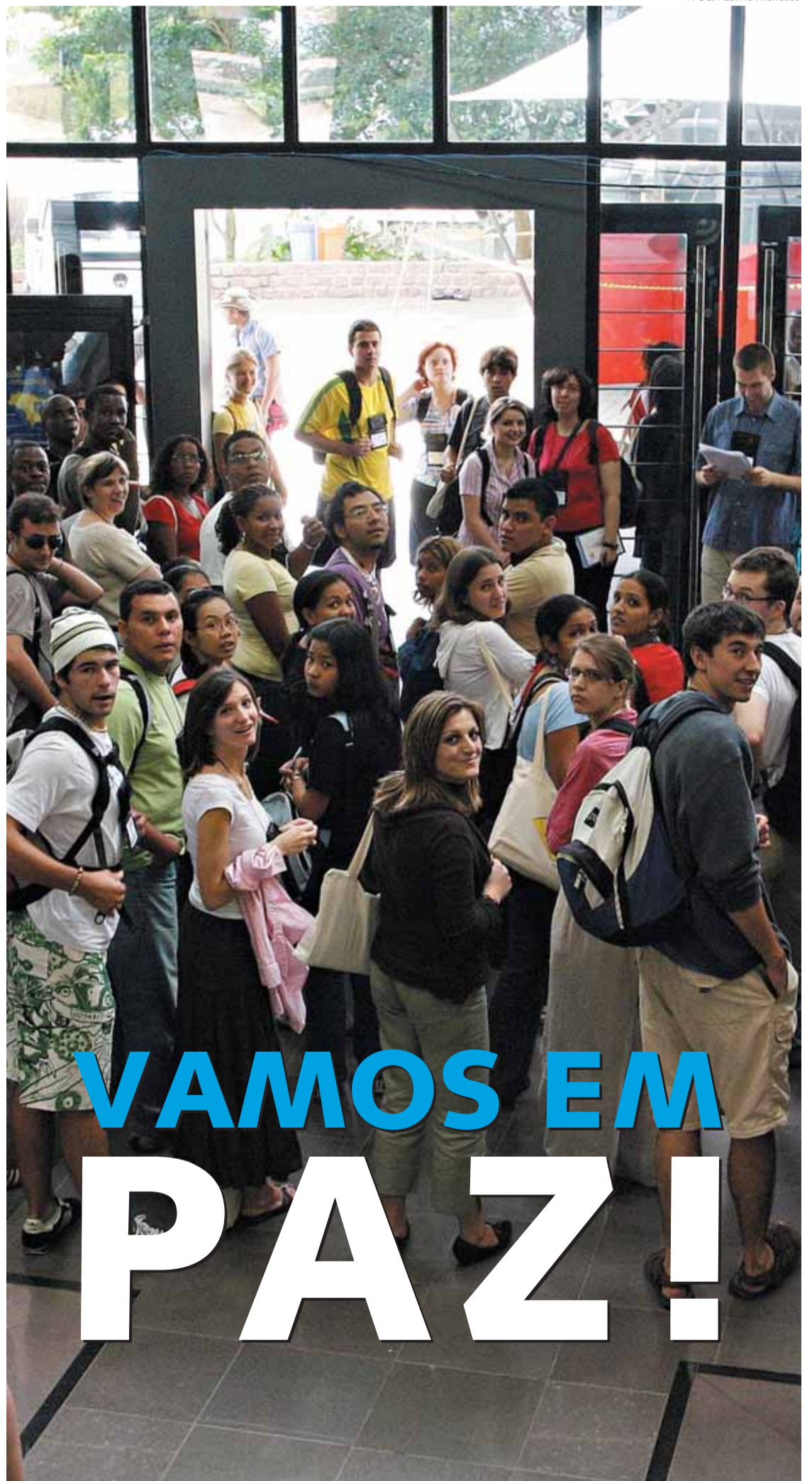
Spiritual life

On its last day, the Assembly's morning and evening worship relate to the last of the six variants on the Assembly theme: "God in your grace, transform *our witness*". A closing prayer was prepared during the Assembly, and the sermon will be on Rev. 22:1-5. The symbol for worship today is seeds, prompting us to think about the seeds sown by the 9th Assembly, how far they will scatter, and what fruits they will bear.

More stories, photo and videos on www.wcc-assembly.info

Inside

- 2** Greetings and messages
- 3** Assembly news
- 4-5** Looking back
- 6-7** Behind the scenes
- 8** Practical information



WCC/Paulino Menezes

By the way...

The Assembly after the Assembly

One of the figures *now* sorely missed at an Assembly is the late Father Ion Bria of the Romanian Orthodox Church. He popularised the phrase “the liturgy after the liturgy,” meaning the life of service and witness that Christians undertake from Monday to Saturday in fulfillment of what they celebrate on Sunday. Perhaps we should now speak similarly of “the Assembly after the Assembly.”

Of course Porto Alegre will continue in the form of the reports, the CDs and DVDs, the implementation of decisions on programmes, the work of the new Central Committee and the staff. But how will the Assembly flow on in the actual life of the churches and communities represented here? This will never happen automatically, but only through the personal efforts of the delegates and other participants.

One basic need is for the local churches and communities to be given a sense that, through those who represented them, this was their Assembly too. Enthusiasm can indeed be infectious, but just as each participant represents a certain constituency to this Assembly, so on returning home each has to represent the Assembly. That means more than saying “I had a wonderful (or awful) time in Porto Alegre.” What kind of “we” consciousness will each take back?

At one of the worship services in Porto Alegre on Sunday morning some of the “greetings” brought by Assembly participants got little further than “who I am,” with no attempt also to speak on behalf of the wider family of visitors sitting there. One trusts that these were exceptions and that most people will take home a deeper sense of their identity as belonging to the whole household of God. Our Assembly has included sisters and brothers witnessing with extraordinary faith and courage in the midst of difficulties unimaginable to many of us, and whom to know and pray with is itself transforming grace.

The first of these columns recalled the pioneer J.H. Oldham and his commendation of the “perfectly mad adventure” of the ecumenical mission. As we conclude, it’s worth referring again to this person with disability (acute deafness) and his lively correspondence with the first general secretary of the WCC, Wim Visser’t Hooft, in the months before the Amsterdam Assembly in 1948. Many were asking not only what decisions the Assembly would make but, particularly, what kind of *statements* it would issue. Oldham was highly sceptical about the value of any Assembly statements and told Visser’t Hooft: “Ask the church representatives what actual *commitments* they are making for concrete actions when they return home, and let *those* be the statement!”

Oldham did not quite get his way on that one, which maybe was just as well, since Amsterdam did make an important declaration. But he struck a note that still rings true. Having seen here something of the future of transforming grace, what will *you do*, in and for your church, your organisation, your community, your family, to let that future transformation happen?

Angelos (a.k.a. Keith Clements)

Messages to the 9th Assembly (extracts)



Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa

The Orthodox Church is aware that the ecumenical movement takes on new forms in order to respond to new conditions and to deal with the new challenges of the world today. The creative contribution and witness of the Orthodox Church, on the basis of its apostolic tradition and faith, is of vital importance and necessity for the way ahead. We pray that all the Christian churches work together, so that the day is near when the Lord will fulfill the hope of the churches, that they be “one flock with one Shepherd.”



The Patriarch of Jerusalem, Theophilos III

From the Holy City of Jerusalem, from the Mother of all churches, from the Holy Land, the land of the Bible, from the Holy Shrines of Christendom, we salute and bless the participants of the 9th Assembly of the WCC in Brazil, and we wish that this Assembly will contribute to the promotion of the goal of the ecumenical dialogue which is the life in love, truth and unity as it was delivered to us from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Apostles and the Holy Church Fathers.



Ignatius Zakka I Iwas, Syrian Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

We are delighted that the World Council of Churches has adopted “God, in your grace, transform the world” as a theme for its 9th Assembly; such a theme is giving hope to all participants and the world at large. The theme comes to us at a time when the church is examining its prophetic message to the world in the third millennium dealing with social justice, reconciliation and peace.



Geoff Tunnicliffe, World Evangelical Alliance

Integral mission or holistic transformation is the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. It is not simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.



Sudan Council of Churches

On behalf of the churches in Sudan, we express our sincere thanks to God for giving us peace after more than 40 years of war. We are furthermore very thankful to the WCC and other ecumenical bodies for their consistent accompaniment. We call on this assembly to continue support for our country in prayer, humanitarian assistance and international advocacy work. God, in your grace, transform the Sudan into a country of justice and peace.



World YWCA and the World Alliance of YMCAs

Lourdes Saad Olivera from Argentina, brought greetings to the Assembly on behalf of these two organizations. She urged the Assembly “to make financial resources available for youth work. The future of the ecumenical movement requires investment in the development of young leadership now. You cannot wait for tomorrow. . . . As a young woman I would like to make a special plea for the inclusion of young women in decision-making and in programmes.”



Dr Kofi Annan, secretary-general of the United Nations

At a time when some would seek to divide the human family by exploiting differences among peoples, the United Nations needs more than ever the support of men and women of faith like you. That is why I am pleased to extend my best wishes to this ninth Assembly.

Assembly elects new presidents, central committee

A new body to lead the WCC into the next decade was elected on Wednesday. Delegates at the Assembly also endorsed measures designed to strengthen youth participation in the organization's decision-making processes.

The Assembly elected a 150-member central committee, which serves as the main decision-making body of the Council between assemblies. The Assembly also appointed presidents for each of the world regions and for the Orthodox and

Oriental Orthodox churches.

During the Assembly, the WCC leadership and many delegates urged the Council to find ways of strengthening youth participation and of involving young adults in the leadership and decision-making of the church fellowship. Proposals for a new representative body for youth will be discussed on the last day of the Assembly.

"I am pleased to report that the number of youth has increased to 22, rep-

resenting 15% of the central committee," said the Rev. Dr Bernice Powell-Jackson, moderator of the Assembly Nominations Committee, presenting the final slate of names for approval.

The new 150-person central committee counts 63 women and 6 Indigenous persons among its number, and 97 members of the committee are ordained. The nominations committee worked with a pool of names put forward by the WCC's 348 member churches. A 25-person executive committee, a moderator and two vice-moderators will be elected by the central committee later this week.

The role of the WCC presidents is to promote ecumenism and to interpret the work of the WCC, especially in their respective regions. The presidents are ex-officio members of central committee.

The new WCC presidents

Africa: Rev. Prof. Dr Simon Dossou, Methodist Church in Benin

Asia: Rev. Dr Soritua Nababan, Protestant Christian Batak Church (HKBP)

Caribbean/Latin America: Rev. Dr Ofelia Ortega, Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba

Europe: Dr Mary Tanner, Church of England

North America: Rev. Dr Bernice Powell-Jackson, United Church of Christ

Pacific: Mr John Taroanui Doom, Maohi Protestant Church

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

Oriental Orthodox: Patriarch Paulos, Ethiopian Orthodox Church

Photos: WCC/Paulino Menezes



Conselho elege presidentes

Delegados da 9a Assembléia do Conselho Mundial de Igrejas elegeram, ontem, os presidentes das suas oito regiões. Eles são: para a África, o rev. professor Simon Dossou, da Igreja Metodista no Benin; para a Ásia, o rev. dr. Soritua Nababan, da Igreja Protestante Batak, na Indonésia; para América Latina e Caribe, a revda. Dra. Ofélia Ortega, da Igreja Presbiteriana Reformada em Cuba; para a Europa, a dra. Mary Tanner, da Igreja da Inglaterra; para a América do Norte, a revda. dra. Bernice Powell Jackson, da Igreja Unida de Cristo; para o Pacífico, o sr. John Taroanui Doom, da Igreja Protestante do Taiti; para o Leste Ortodoxo, o arcebispo dr. Anastasios de Tirana e Albânia e para o Oriente Ortodoxo, Sua Santidade Abune Paulos, da Igreja Ortodoxa da Etiopia. Todos os presidentes têm uma longa folha de serviços prestados ao ecumenismo.

Presidenta

Cubana preside CMI na América Latina



A revda. Ofélia Ortega, da Igreja Presbiteriana Reformada de Cuba, eleita ontem presidente do CMI para América Latina e Caribe, trabalhou para o CMI de 1988 a 1996; primeiro como professora no Instituto Ecu- mênico e depois como secretária-exe- cutiva do Programa de Educação Teológica. Doutora em Teologia, ela foi reitora do Seminário Evangélico Teológico de Matanzas, em Cuba, e também a primeira mulher pres- biteriana a ser ordenada ministra naquele país.

World Council of Churches 9th Assembly

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 the 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. 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, t

Dios, em tu gracia, transforma el mundo

Deus, em t

In deiner Gnade, Gott, verwandle die W



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

A grace-filled gathering

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 tried out 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 smaller 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 in Sunday's dramatic presentations of the history of the region and its churches. A new feature, the *Mutirão* (a Brazilian word meaning 'meeting place'), provided space for exploring a variety of issues and causes.

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.



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

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



19 feb ▲

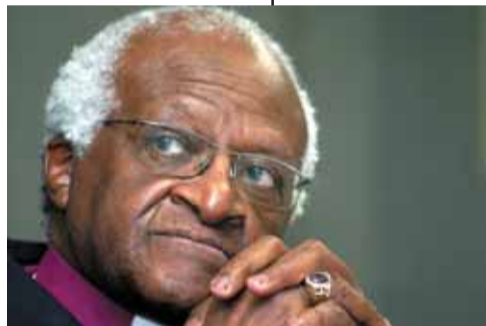
20 feb ▼

21 feb ▲

22 feb ▼

23 feb ▲

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



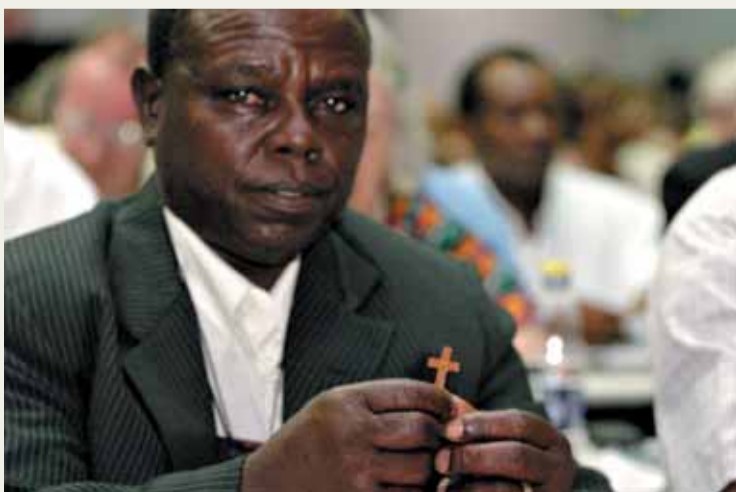
A candle-light walk for peace drew crowds to downtown Porto Alegre.

transform the world

tuva graça, transforma o mundo

Velt

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.

Photos: WCC/Paulino Menezes and Igor Sperotto

Faces from behind the scenes...

WCC/Paulino Menezes



Behind the scenes (and sometimes on the stage) were people who helped make it all happen. You are too many to name or to portray here. All we can say is a big "obrigado" to all of you who made this Assembly possible.



(Some) Assembly people

WCC/Paulino Menezes



Doug Chial, Assembly coordinator, Geneva
Chial's planning for the Assembly included three advance trips to Porto Alegre. His biggest challenge was making sure "all the building blocks fit together to form a complete experience." One of these building blocks, the ecumenical conversations, was introduced for the first time at this Assembly. "What I like about the ecumenical conversations," Chial says, "is that they give the Assembly an opportunity to be in dialogue about issues, free from pressures to make decisions and produce reports. Ultimately it's in the discussions that you will experience the grace of God, not in the decisions."

WCC/Paulino Menezes



Rev. Rui Bernhard, Assembly local coordinator, Brazil
This Lutheran pastor spent two years helping plan logistics for the 9th Assembly, recruiting some 400 local volunteers and organizing them into 20 working groups. His biggest challenge? "The worship tent," he says, without hesitation. "Finding a tent that was big enough and cheap enough, and then finding a place to put it." But the positive comments he has received have convinced him that this Assembly was definitely "worth the investment of time and people."



Photos: WCC/Paulino Menezes, Igor Sperotto e Sean Hawkey



WCC/Paulino Menezes



Dr Tércio Junker, assistant music director, Brazil
This Methodist pastor and liturgy professor worked with Assembly music director Michael Horn to choose the music for Assembly prayer services and integrate it with Scripture and other elements. He has been rehearsing with the Assembly choir since late 2004. His biggest thrill: "Seeing all those Brazilian singers from different traditions getting together and singing in more than 10 different languages. This will be such a gift to the local churches. Exposure to other churches will make them see the world differently."

WCC



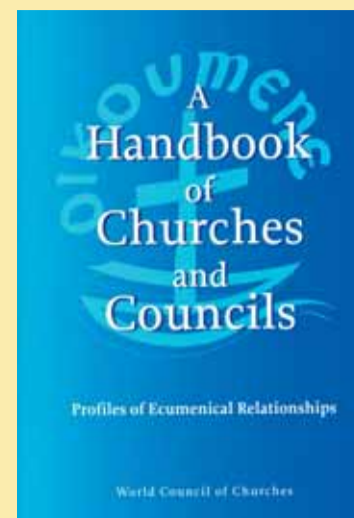
Mrs Ruth Kobia, wife of WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, Kenya
"This is my first Assembly, and I have enjoyed the experience of learning and meeting so many people. It is a joyful event, with many highlights. The Bible studies have been really fantastic. Such a gathering confirms how important it is for churches to meet and move forward together. I will be leaving with an impression of great hope that through our lives and our churches our world can be transformed."

Obrigado aos nossos fiéis leitores!

WCC/Igor Sperotto



Essential resource



The latest WCC publication, which made it to the Assembly yesterday after a customs delay, is *A Handbook of Churches and Councils*, by Huibert van Beek. It is on sale now from the WCC shop outside the plenary hall. More than just a handbook, it profiles ecumenical relationships at all levels – global, regional, national and local. By including other churches which are not formally part of the Council's membership, it demonstrates concretely the reach of the ecumenical movement.

Share the story of Porto Alegre!

Remember to get your Assembly CD and DVD with video highlights

As a lasting souvenir of the 9th Assembly, WCC is offering all delegates and participants a special CD and DVD to take back to the churches. Participants who did not receive discs on Wednesday afternoon, should get them outside the plenary hall today. The CD contains daily news, hundreds of photos and documents in five languages. The DVD contains video highlights from the Assembly, and is offered in both NTSC and PAL formats for use in all countries. These resources are designed to help you share the experience with your community. A full account of the Assembly will be produced by WCC in late 2006.

As the CD and DVD were prepared before the end of the Assembly, they contain news, images and texts from the first week of the event. All images, final versions of the documents and additional video highlights and recordings of the theme plenaries are available on the official Assembly website:

www.wcc-assembly.info



A final reminder

Participants leaving Porto Alegre on Thursday 23rd or Friday 24th February will be picked up by buses from 6:00 to 19:00 every two hours, according to the sector routes already established.

Participants should arrange to depart from their hotels 3 hours before their flights are scheduled.

Those leaving on 25th or 26th February should go to the Fellini desk at their hotel to arrange transport.



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

Texts and photos by WCC 9th assembly communication staff

Newspaper team:
Alex Belopopsky, Eva Stimson, Dave Wanless, Keith Clements, Zenaide Barbosa

Design and production:
Lavoro C&M, Cristina Pozzobon,
Rosana Pozzobon (Porto Alegre)

Photographers: Peter Williams, Paulino Menezes, Igor Sperotto

Comments and announcements:
newspaper@wcc-coe.org
www.wcc-assembly.info