



The Rev. Nancy L. Wilson  
MCC Moderator

**A Message From  
The Reverend Nancy L. Wilson  
Office of the Moderator  
Metropolitan Community Churches**

***"Why We Are Going to the Ninth Assembly of the  
World Council of Churches"***

February 12, 2006

Last year, in Calgary, MCC General Conference adopted a Strategic Plan for Metropolitan Community Churches that included the following statements of purpose:

***"As God's Liberated People, We Boldly:  
Reclaim our Holy Identity...  
Advance our Call to Social Justice...  
Tell the Story of God's Transforming  
Grace...  
Nurture the Value of Community...  
Build Bridges that Liberate and Unite..."***

All of these purposes are well served by MCC's attendance and participation in the upcoming Ninth Assembly of the **World Council of Churches** in Brazil during February 14-23.

The **World Council of Churches** was formed in 1948 in Amsterdam. The international WCC Assemblies are held once every 7 or 8 years, and draw 5,000 people representing more than 347 denominations and regional and national councils of churches, along with representatives from churches that are not members of the Council (including the Roman Catholic Church and Metropolitan Community Churches). Most of WCC's member churches identify as Protestant or Orthodox. It is "one of the broadest global gatherings of its kind," according to the WCC.

MCC first attended as a denominational visitor to the Vancouver Assembly in 1983. I had the opportunity to attend a portion of the Assembly, and **Rev. Colleen Darraugh** was MCC's seminary student representative. By the time of the Canberra Assembly in 1991, MCC requested, and was granted, Official Observer status. At that Assembly, I addressed the women delegates at a special program of the "Women's Tent," and **Rev. Greg Smith**, then from Sydney, Australia, and new to MCC, was featured in a drama /dialogue about HIV/AIDS.

MCC took a full delegation to the WCC Assembly in Harare in 1998 -- our participation was funded in part by a grant from the Ford Foundation. It

was especially helpful to have **Jim Birkitt**, MCC's Communications Officer as a member of the MCC delegation. LGBT issues had exceptionally high visibility at that gathering, fueled by the international controversy over the human rights group **Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)** and whether they would be allowed to participate in the WCC Assembly. There were about 200 openly LGBT visitors to the assembly and MCC presented several workshops and hosted a well-attended press conference for international media. **Rev. Elder Hong Tan** preached at a worship service that was organized and presented by MCC, and which generated significant interest among WCC Assembly participants.

This year, the **World Council of Churches' Ninth Assembly** will take place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and will last for 10 days -- from February 14-23. For the first time, I have been invited by the WCC to be the facilitator for one of the daily small group Bible Studies on the Assembly theme, which is **"God, in Your Grace, Transform the World."** The entire Assembly, as the conference program book notes, is a spiritual experience of prayer, encounter, reflection and discernment. Much like our own **MCC World Jubilee**, there are gatherings for morning and evening prayers, a chapel, a daily newspaper, and numerous workshops. Additionally, members of MCC's delegation will take the opportunity to worship with local Brazilian congregations on Sunday.

**Reclaim our Holy Identity:** In the midst of 5,000 Christians, whose points of view around homosexuality and the church diverge enormously, members of MCC's delegation will be ourselves! Our delegation will participate fully in worship and service, in study and reflection, around all the issues before the Assembly. We will meet thousands of people over the 10 day period, and we pray that they will see Christ in us as we see Christ in them. The members of MCC's delegation are wholly committed to being catalysts for changing hearts, minds and spirits, as God has called us to be.

**Advance our Call to Social Justice and Action:** We will bring to the table – both to our formal and our informal conversations – the justice needs of our communities and our concerns for LGBT human rights the world over. We will find ways to share the urgent plight of our sisters and brothers in Jamaica. We will also have opportunities to learn about social justice issues in a global context. We will hear some of the finest speakers and church leaders talk about globalization, poverty, war and peace, HIV/AIDS and human sexuality. I am especially pleased that 16 workshops will be held during this Assembly to focus on the on-going global pandemic of HIV and AIDS. And, as has been true in the past, there may again be opportunities for direct public actions to focus attention upon serious issues of global concern.

**Tell the Story of God's Transforming Grace:** This WCC Assembly will provide amazing opportunities to witness to thousands of faith leaders about our experience of the liberating gospel of Christ. Our delegates will lead a workshop about the story and message of MCC. We will offer a public worship service during the Assembly. We will meet scores of news media people throughout the world, who will interview us and want to learn more about MCC. We will have hundreds of opportunities, one on one, to tell our personal stories to delegates and visitors from around the world who ask, "What is MCC?" We will be bringing with us copies of our literature in English, Spanish and

Portuguese, and copies of **Rev. Troy Perry's** new book. There will be regular reports from the MCC Communications Office on news of the Assembly and our participation, for our MCC family-- and regular external media updates for members of the press.

**Nurture the Value of Community:** We will meet daily with other LGBT delegates and visitors to the Assembly, hearing about the struggles of Anglicans and others around issues of sexuality. We will make new friends, and will find valuable new allies from all over the world who can help us in our vital mission, and with whom we, in turn, can partner and provide mutual support.

We will find ways to welcome and thank the new WCC General Secretary, **Sam Kobia**, from Kenya, who recently "came out" about the fact that several of his family members have HIV or AIDS. He is an advocate of open conversation about issues such as human sexuality, and is a person of courage and conviction.

We will have opportunity to meet with **MCC leaders within Brazil**, who will be visiting the Assembly as well, and we will meet with long time friends from **Other Sheep**, in Latin America, who will also be present. And as always, we will have many opportunities to meet with **still-closeted LGBT Christians, clergy and laity**, who are eager to learn about MCC and the inclusive gospel we preach.

**Build Bridges that Liberate and Unite:** At this Assembly, we will explore and be challenged about the ways in which we truly have common cause with the World Council of Churches, even with people and denominations who have not yet heard of MCC, and we will encourage and facilitate open dialogue with those who aren't sure they accept MCC, specifically, or LGBT people of faith, in general, "as church." We will look for ways, as we leave Porto Alegre, to follow up on the experiences we've had, and continue to grow in our relationship with the churches and the ministries of the WCC.

One of MCC's delegates, **Dr. Araceli Izzatti**, from Uruguay, is a highly respected, long time participant, as a Methodist, on the **WCC Commission on Faith and Order**, and on the team dedicated to focusing on the **WCC Decade to Overcome Violence**. **Dr. Izzatti**, who is now MCC clergy and the parent of a gay person, will be a wonderful addition to our team this year, helping us to build bridges.

I am asking for your prayers as our MCC delegation -- including Elders, staff and volunteers -- travels to Brazil for this very important moment in the life of the WCC and in the life of MCC.

***Together, let us pray that God's transforming grace will be abundantly at work within and through us all!***

Grace and peace,

/signed/

**The Reverend Nancy L. Wilson**

Office of the Moderator

Metropolitan Community Churches

[www.MCCchurch.org](http://www.MCCchurch.org)



**MCC'S DELEGATION:**

You are invited to offer prayers for the work and ministry of MCC's delegation to the 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches during February 14-23, as well as prayers for all participants who will gather from 347 different Christian denominations and councils.

**The members of the MCC delegation are:**

**Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson**  
**Rev. Elder Darlene Garner**  
**Rev. Elder Diane Fisher**  
**Rev. Jim Birkitt**  
**Rev. Araceli Izzatti**  
**Rev. Paul Fairley**  
**Lynn Farrand**  
**Connie Meadows**  
**Gelson Piber**  
**Hilde Scheibe**  
**Ann Vassilaros**