

Ethiopian leader promotes role of church in peace building

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Eyob Yishak, who coordinates the peace office of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and teaches at Mekane Yesus Theological Seminary in Addis Ababa, was one of several leaders who gathered to talk about the role of religious groups in peace building.

The Lutheran World Federation and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches hosted a consultation, Faith-Based Engagement in Conflict Transformation, in December in Zimbabwe.

“The consultation reminded me once again of the importance of comprehensive and proper narratives of conflict histories and the healing of past wounds,” Yishak said.

He sees the role of the church as including rebuilding social, economic, and political infrastructure that has been destroyed by violence, promoting fairness and justice, and speaking up for the marginalized.

“Peace building,” he said, “requires speaking out against evil and challenging authorities whenever it seems necessary.”

He has seen several achievements already in his peace-building work in Ethiopia, such as sports festivals held in 2013 and 2014 with youth from the Oromo and Gumuz ethnic groups, which have fought each other in the past.

In April 2016, he was among the planners of a peace and reconciliation conference.

“Conflicting ethnic groups, the Anywa and Nuer, were able to forgive each other and wash one another’s feet,” he said. “This was three months after the conflict, and it has contributed to the reduction of violence and mistrust between the two peoples.”
—Lutheran World Relief

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