

Religiously Speaking

RELIGION

VIEW OF DONATION

AME & AME Zion
(African Methodist Episcopal)

Organ and tissue donation is viewed as an act of neighborly love and charity by these denominations. They encourage all members to support donation as a way of helping others.

Amish

The Amish will consent to transplantation if they believe it is for the well being of the transplant recipient. John Hostetler, world-renowned authority on Amish religion and professor of anthropology at Temple University in Philadelphia, says in his book, *Amish Society*, "The Amish believe that since God created the human body, it is God who heals. However, nothing in the Amish understanding of the Bible forbids them from using modern medical services, including surgery, hospitalization, dental work, anesthesia, blood transfusions or immunization."

Assembly of God

The Church has no official policy regarding organ and tissue donation. The decision to donate is left up to the individual. Donation is highly supported by the denomination.

Bahá'í

There is no prohibition in the Bahá'í Faith on organ donation. It is a matter left to the individual conscience (Office of Public Information, Bahá'í International Community, November 10, 2005).

Baptist

Organ and tissue donation is supported as an act of charity. The Baptist Church leaves the decision up to the individual.

Brethren

While no official position has been taken by the Brethren denominations, according to Pastor Mike Smith, there is a consensus among the National Fellowship of Grace Brethren that organ and tissue donation is a charitable act so long as it does not impede the life or hasten the death of the donor or does not come from an unborn child.

Buddhism

Buddhists believe organ and tissue donation is a matter of individual conscience and place a high value on acts of compassion. Reverend Gyomay Masao, president and founder of the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, says, "We honor those people who donate their bodies and organs to the advancement of medical science and to saving lives." The importance of letting loved ones know your wishes is stressed.

Catholicism

Catholics view organ and tissue donation as an act of charity and love. Transplants are morally and ethically acceptable to the Vatican. His Holiness Pope Francis has described the act of organ donation as, "testimony of love for our neighbor." His Holiness Pope John Paul II also said, "The Catholic Church would promote the fact that there is a need for organ donors and Christians should accept this as a 'challenge to their generosity and fraternal love' so long as ethical principles are followed."

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Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)

The Christian Church encourages organ and tissue donation, stating that we were created for God's glory and for sharing God's love. A 1985 resolution, adopted by the General Assembly, encourages, "... members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to enroll as organ donors and prayerfully support those who have received an organ transplant."

Christian Science

The Church of Christian Science does not have a specific position regarding organ donation. According to the First Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, Christian Scientists normally rely on spiritual instead of medical means of healing. They are free, however, to choose whatever form of medical treatment they desire – including a transplant. The question of organ and tissue donation is an individual decision.

Episcopal

The Episcopal Church passed a resolution in 1982 that recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ, blood and tissue donation. All Christians are encouraged to become organ, blood and tissue donors "...as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave His life, that we may have life in its fullness."

Eastern Orthodox

Transplants, such as skin grafting and blood transfusions, are acceptable. This belief has been extended to include organ transplants.

Evangelical

Independent Conservative Evangelicals support organ, tissue and cornea donation.

Gypsies (Roma)

Gypsies are a people of different ethnic groups without a formalized religion. They share common folk beliefs and tend to oppose organ donation. Their opposition is connected with their beliefs about the afterlife. Traditional belief contends that, for one year after death, the soul retraces its steps. Thus, the body must remain intact because the soul maintains its physical shape.

Hindu

According to the Hindu Temple Society of North America, religious law does not prohibit Hindus from donating their organs. This act is an individual's decision. H.L. Trivedi, in Transplantation Proceedings, says, "Hindu mythology has stories in which the parts of the human body are used for the benefit of other humans and society. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that parts of humans, dead or alive, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans."

Islam

The Muslim Religious Council initially rejected organ donation by followers of Islam in 1983; but it has reversed its position. Today, the religion of Islam strongly believes in the principle of saving human lives. According to A. Sachedina in his Transplantation Proceedings (1990) article, Islamic Views on Organ Transplantation, "...the majority of the Muslim scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic law have invoked the principle of the priority of saving human life and have permitted the organ transplant as a necessity to procure that noble end."

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Jehovah's Witness

According to the Watch Tower Society, Jehovah's Witnesses believe donation is a matter of individual decision. Jehovah's Witnesses are often assumed to be against donation because of their opposition to blood transfusions. However, this merely means that all blood must be removed from the organs and tissue before being transplanted.

Judaism

All four branches of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist) support and encourage donation. According to Orthodox Rabbi Moses Tendler, Chairman of the Biology Department of Yeshiva University in New York City and Chairman of the Bioethics Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America, *"If one is in the position to donate an organ to save another's life, it's obligatory to do so, even if the donor never knows who the beneficiary will be. The basic principle of Jewish ethics, 'the infinite worth of the human being,' also includes donation of corneas, since eyesight restoration is considered a lifesaving operation."* In 1991, the Rabbinical Council of America (Orthodox) approved organ donation as permissible, and even required, from brain-dead patients.

The Lutheran Church of America

Lutherans passed a resolution in 1984 stating that donation contributes to the well being of humanity and can be *"an expression of sacrificial love for a neighbor in need."* They call on *"members to consider donating... and to make any necessary family and legal arrangements, including the use of a signed donor card."*

Mennonite

Mennonites have no formal position on donation, but are not opposed to it. They believe the decision to donate is up to the individual and/or his or her family.

Mormon/LDS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints believes the decision to donate is an individual one made in conjunction with family, medical personnel and prayer. Jerry Cahill, Director of Public Affairs for the Mormon Church, says, *"Mormons must individually weigh the advantages and disadvantages of transplantation and choose the one that will bring them peace and comfort. The Church does not interpose any objection to an individual decision in favor of organ and tissue donation."*

Pentecostal

Pentecostals believe that the decision to donate should be left up to the individual.

Presbyterian

Presbyterians encourage and support donation. They respect a person's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body.

Protestant

Protestants encourage and endorse organ donation. Reverend James W. Rassbach, Lutheran Board of Communication Services, Missouri-Synod, says *"Organ donations enable more abundant life, alleviate pain and suffering and are an expression of love in times of tragedy."*

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Seventh-Day Adventist

Donation and transplantation are strongly encouraged. They have many transplant hospitals, including Loma Linda in California, which specializes in pediatric heart transplants.

Shinto

In Shinto, the dead body is considered to be impure and dangerous, and thus quite powerful. *"In old belief context, injuring a dead body is a serious crime..."* according to E. Namihira in his article, *Shinto Concept Concerning the Dead Human Body*. *"To this day it is difficult to obtain consent from bereaved families for organ donation or dissection for medical education or pathological anatomy. The Japanese regard them all in the sense of injuring a dead body."* Families are often concerned that they not injure the itai, the relationship between the dead person and the bereaved.

Sikh

The Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself. The Sikh faith stresses the importance of performing noble deeds. There are many examples of selfless giving and sacrifice in Sikh teachings by the 10 Gurus and other Sikhs. Sikhs believe life after death is a continuous cycle of rebirth, but the physical body is not needed in this cycle — a person's soul is [the] real essence.

Society of Friends
(Quakers)

Organ and tissue donation is widely believed to be an individual decision. The Society of Friends does not have an official position on donation.

Southern Baptist

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has no official position on organ donation. However, the SBC has endorsed organ donation in certain situations, citing the positive, life-saving contribution of organ donation. They denied that the bodily resurrection required the wholeness of the body at death, and praised the selflessness, stewardship, and compassion, and alleviation of suffering associated with organ donation.

United Church of Christ

Reverend Jay Lintner, Director, Washington Office of the United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society, says, *"United Church of Christ people, churches and agencies are extremely and overwhelmingly supportive of organ sharing. The General Synod has never spoken to this issue because, in general, the Synod speaks on more controversial issues, and there is no controversy about organ sharing, just as there is no controversy about blood donation in the denomination."*

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation, and thereby encourages all Christians to become organ and tissue donors by signing and carrying donor cards. Donation is to be encouraged in congregations, and pastoral-care persons should be willing to explore these options as a normal part of conversation with patients and their families.