

Faith Perspectives on Organ, Tissue and Eye Donation

AME (African Methodist Episcopal) & AME Zion

Donation is viewed as an act of neighborly love and charity. 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. According to John Hostetler, a world-renowned authority on the Amish faith, the Amish believe that because 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

While the church has no official policy on donation, it has highly supported donation in the past. The decision to donate is left to the individual.

Baha'ism

Baha'ism believes that transplants are acceptable if prescribed by medical authorities, and followers are permitted to donate their bodies for research.

Baptist

In 1988, the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution supporting donation as a way to alleviate suffering and demonstrate compassion for the needs of others. It is supported as an act of charity.

Brethren

The Church of the Brethren's Annual Conference in 1993 developed a resolution on organ and tissue donation supporting and encouraging donation. They wrote: "We have the opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs and tissues."

Buddhism

Buddhists believe donation is a matter of individual conscience, and high value is placed on acts of compassion. Reverend Gyomay Kobose, 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. Many families will not give permission to donate unless they know their loved one wanted to be a donor.

Catholicism

Catholics view donation as an act of charity and love. Transplants are morally and ethically acceptable to the Vatican.

In 1956, Pope Pius XII declared: "A person may will to dispose of his body and to destine it to ends that are useful, morally irreproachable and even noble, among them the desire to aid the sick and suffering...this decision should not be condemned but positively justified."

In August 2000, Pope John Paul II told attendees at the International Congress on Transplants in Rome: "Transplants are a great step forward in science's service of man, and not a few people today owe their lives to an organ transplant. Increasingly, the technique of transplants has proven to be a valid means of attaining the primary goal of all medicine—the service of human life. ... There is a need to instill in people's hearts, especially in the hearts of the young, a genuine and deep appreciation of the need for brotherly love, a love that can find expression in the decision to become an organ donor."

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In His Encyclical letter, *Evangelium Vitae* (On the Value and Inviolability of Human Life), Pope John Paul II observed: "There is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures and sharing, big or small, which build up an authentic culture of life. A particularly praiseworthy example of such gestures is the donation of organs in a morally acceptable manner."

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

The Church encourages organ and tissue donation, stating that individuals 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

Christian Scientists normally rely on spiritual means of healing. They are free to choose any form of medical treatment they desire, including a transplant. The question of donation is an individual decision.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormon)

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. The Church issued this policy statement on June 3, 1974: "The question of whether one should will bodily organs to be used as transplants or for research after death must be answered from deep within the conscience of the individual involved. Those who seek counsel from the church on this subject are encouraged to review the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, to implore the Lord for inspiration and guidance, and then to take the course of action which would give them a feeling of peace and comfort."

Church of Nazarene

The Church encourages members who do not object personally to support donor and recipient anatomical gifts through living wills and trusts.

Episcopal

In 1982, the Church passed a resolution that recognizes the life-giving benefits of blood, organ and tissue donation. All Episcopalians are encouraged to become 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."

Evangelical Covenant Church

A resolution passed at the Annual Meeting in 1982 encouraged members to "sign and carry Organ Donor Cards." The resolution also recommended "that it becomes a policy with our pastors, teachers, and counselors to encourage awareness of organ donation in all our congregations."

Greek Orthodox

The Church approves of organ and tissue donation provided that it better human life through transplantation or research, leading to improvements in the treatment and prevention of disease.

Hinduism

According to the Hindu Temple Society of North and South America, Hindus are not prohibited from donation as confirmed by religious laws. This act is an individual's decision. H. L. Trivedi, in *Transplant Proceedings*, stated: "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."

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Independent Conservative Evangelical

In general, Evangelicals have no opposition to donation. Each church is autonomous and leaves the decision to donate up to the individual.

Islam

The principle of saving lives is of utmost importance. According to A. Sachedina in *Transplantation Proceedings*, "The majority of the Muslim scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic law have invoked the principle of priority of saving human life and have permitted the organ transplant as a necessity to procure that noble end."

Jehovah's Witness

According to the Watch Tower Society, donation is a matter of individual decision. Members are often assumed to be against donation because of their restriction regarding blood transfusions. However, this means only that all blood must be removed from the organs and tissues before being transplanted.

Judaism

All four branches of Judaism—Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist—support and encourage donation. Numerous resolutions have been passed encouraging donation. According to Orthodox Rabbi Moses Tendler, 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." For information on Orthodox Judaism and organ donation, visit the Halachic Organ Donor Society at www.hods.org.

Lutheran

The Lutheran Church of America passed a resolution in 1984 stating that donation contributes to the well-being of humanity and can be "an expression of love for a neighbor in need." The Church calls on its members to consider donation and to make any necessary family and legal arrangements to do so.

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 the family.

Moravian

The Moravian Church does not have an official policy addressing organ/tissue donation or transplantation. The choice to donate is left to individual church members.

Mormon

See *Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*

Pentecostal

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

Presbyterian

The Church encourages and supports donation. Presbyterians respect a person's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body.

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Quaker

Organ and tissue donation is considered a matter of individual decision. The Society of Friends does not have an official position on donation.

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army finds organ donation and transplantation acceptable.

Seventh-Day Adventist

Donation and transplantation are strongly encouraged. Many transplant hospitals, including Loma Linda in California, are Seventh-Day Adventist.

Spiritualism

Spiritual Ministers are highly supportive of organ and tissue donation.

Unitarian Universalist

Unitarian Universalists affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person and respect the interdependent web of all existence. They affirm the value of organ and tissue donation, but leave the decision to each individual.

United Church of Christ

Reverend Jay Litner, Director for the Washington Office of the United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society, states that: "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. Blood donation rooms have been set up at several General Synods. Similarly, any organized effort to get the General Synod delegates or individual churches to sign organ donation cards would meet with generally positive responses."

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church issued a policy statement in 1984 regarding organ and tissue donation. It stated: "The United Methodist Church recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donors by signing and carrying cards or driver's licenses, attesting to their commitment of such organs upon their death, to those in need, as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave his life that we might have life in its fullness." A 1992 resolution states: "Donation is to be encouraged, assuming appropriate safeguards against hastening death and determination of death by reliable criteria." The resolution further states that "Pastoral-Care persons should be willing to explore these options as a normal part of conversation with patients and their families."

Wesleyan Church

The Wesleyan Church supports donation as a way of helping others. It believes that God's "ability to resurrect us is not dependent on whether or not all our parts were connected at death." It also supports research and, in 1989, noted in a task force report on public morals and social concerns that "one of the ways that a Christian can do good is to request that their body be donated to a medical school for use in teaching."