

# Faith and Donation

The death of a loved one often raises spiritual and religious issues. When faced with the decision of organ and tissue donation during the trauma of a family member's death, a person's religious group's position on the subject suddenly becomes very important. Contact Donate Life Northwest at 503-494-7888 for more information.

## **AME & AME ZION (AFRICAN METHODOIST 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.

## **BAHÁ'Í**

There is no prohibition in the Bahá'í Faith on organ donation. It is a matter left to the individual's conscience.

## **BAPTIST**

Though Baptists generally believe that donation and transplantation are ultimately matters of personal conscience, the nation's largest protest denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, adopted a resolution in 1988 encouraging physicians to request organ donation in appropriate circumstances and to "encourage voluntarism regarding organ donation in the spirit of stewardship, compassion for the needs of others and alleviating suffering."

## **BUDDHISM**

Buddhists believe that donation is a matter of individual conscience and place high value on acts of compassion. The importance of letting loved ones know your wishes is stressed.

## **CATHOLICISM**

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

## **CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)**

The Christian Church encourages organ and tissue donation, stating that individuals were created for God's glory and for sharing of God's love.

## **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. Organ and tissue donation is an individual decision.

## **EPISCOPAL**

The 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recommends and urges "all members of this Church to consider seriously the opportunity to donate organs after death that others may live, and that such decision be clearly stated to family, friends, church and attorney."

## **EASTERN ORTHODOX**

According to Reverend Dr. Milton Efthimiou, Director of the Department of Church and Society for the Greek Orthodox Church of North and South America, "the Greek Orthodox Church is not opposed to organ donation as long as the organs and tissue in question are used to better human life; i.e., for transplantation or for research that will lead to improvements in the treatment and prevention of disease."

## **HINDUISM**

According to the Hindu Temple Society of North America, Hindus are not prohibited by religious law from donating their organs. This act is an individual's decision.

## **ISLAM**

Based on the principles and the foregoing attributes of a Muslim, the majority of Islamic legal scholars have concluded that transplantation of organs as treatment for otherwise lethal end stage organ failure is a good thing. Donation should be considered as an expression of the believer's altruism and Islam encourages the virtuous qualities which are supportive of donation: generosity, duty, charity, co-operation, etc.

## **JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES**

Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that the Bible comments directly on organ transplants; hence: decisions made regarding cornea, kidney, or other tissue transplants must be made by the individual. The same is true regarding bone transplants. Jehovah's Witnesses are often assumed to be opposed to donation because of their belief against blood transfusion. However, this merely means 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. According to Orthodox Rabbi Moses Tendler, "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 life-saving operation."

## **LUTHERAN**

In 1984, the Lutheran Church in America passed a resolution stating that donation contributes to the well-being of humanity and can be "an expression of sacrificial love for a neighbor in need."

## **MORMON (CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS)**

The Church of Jesus Christ Of Latter-Day Saints believes that the decision to donate is an individual one made in conjunction with family, medical personnel, and prayer. They do not oppose donation.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN BELIEFS**

The diversity of tribes and their spiritual practices signifies that there are various beliefs, taboos and practices regarding organ and tissue donation. Many believe that the body should be left whole for the afterlife, while others believe that donations can be made in the spirit of healing and sharing life.

## **PRESBYTERIANS**

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

## **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST**

Donation and transplantation are strongly encouraged by Seventh-Day Adventists. They have many transplant hospitals, such as Loma Linda in California. Loma Linda specializes in pediatric heart transplantation.

## **SHINTO**

In Shinto, the deceased's body is considered to be impure and dangerous, and thus quite powerful. "In folk 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." Many Shintos oppose the taking of organs from those who have just died, or say they would not want an organ transplanted from the dead because it may bring bad luck.

## **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST**

Organ and tissue donation is widely supported by Unitarian Universalists. They view it as an act of love and selfless giving, according to the Unitarian Universalist Association

## **UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

The United Methodist Church issued a policy statement regarding organ and tissue donation. It states, "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 cards or driver's licenses, attesting to their commitment of such organs upon their death, to those in need, as a part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave his life that we might have life in its fullness."