



National Donor Sabbath

Religious Views on Donation

In general there has been broad support for organ donation among most faith communities. We understand that there may be differences of opinion even within any particular religious group. Each decision to become a donor is a personal one. We suggest that individuals consult with their faith leader if they have questions about their faith's view of donation.

Catholicism

Organ, eye, and tissue donation is considered an act of charity and love, and transplants are morally and ethically acceptable to the Vatican. (*Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 86*)

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." (*Resolution #8548 Concerning Organ Transplants, Des Moines, 1985*)

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." (*Resolution #1982-C024 Encourage Christians to Become Organ, Blood, and Tissue Donors, 1982*)

Evangelical Covenant Church

The Evangelical Covenant Church passed a resolution at the Annual Meeting in 1982 encouraging 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." (*Commission on Christian Action; Organ Donor Resolution, 1982*)

Islam

The Fourth Conference of the Islamic Fiqh Council determined that transplantation offers "clear positive results" if practiced "...to achieve the aims of sharie'ah which tries to achieve all that is good and in the best interests of individuals and societies and promotes cooperation, compassion and selflessness." Provided that "shar'i guidelines and controls that protect human dignity" are met, "It is permissible to transplant an organ from a dead person to a living person whose life or basic essential functions depend on that organ, subject to the condition that permission be given

by the deceased before his death, or by his heirs after his death....” Regarding living donation, it is permissible to transplant organs such as a kidney and or a lung “in order to keep the beneficiary alive or to keep some essential or basic function of his body working.” (*Resolutions of Islamic Fiqh Council of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Fourth Conference, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 18-23 Safar 1408 AH/6-11 February 1988 CE*)

Judaism

In principal Judaism sanctions and encourages organ, eye, and tissue donation in order to save lives. Rabbi Elliott N. Dorff wrote that saving a life through organ donation supersedes the rules concerning treatment of a dead body. Transplantation does not desecrate a body or show lack of respect for the dead, and any delay in burial to facilitate organ donation is respectful of the decedent. Organ donation saves lives and honors the deceased.

The Conservative Movement's Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards has stated that organ donations after death represent not only an act of kindness, but are also a “commanded obligation” which saves human lives. (*On Educating Conservative Jews Regarding Organ Donations, May 1996*)

Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church 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 legal arrangements, including the use of a signed donor card.” (*Organ Donation: A Resolution of the Lutheran Church in America, 1984*)

Mormons

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints recognizes that “the donation of organs and tissues is a selfless act that often results in great benefit ...The decision to will or donate one’s own body organs or tissue for medical purposes, or the decision to authorize the transplant of organs or tissue from a deceased family member, is made by the individual or the deceased member’s family.” (*Handbook 2: 21.3.7*)

Presbyterian

The Presbyterians denominations encourage and endorse donation. It is an individual's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body. The resolution by one Presbyterian denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation, and thereby encourages all Christians to become organ and tissue donors as a part of their ministry to others ...” (*Minutes of the 195th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), 97, 846*)

Southern Baptist Convention

In 1988, the Southern Baptist Convention resolved that because “resurrection does not depend on body wholeness” and that “organ transplant technology has transformed many lives from certain death to vibrant productivity,” the SBC encourages “voluntarism regarding organ donations in the spirit of stewardship, compassion for the needs of others, and alleviating suffering.” (*Resolution on Human Organ Donations, June, 1988*)

United Methodist

“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,” reports a church policy statement. In a 2000 resolution the church also “encourages its congregations to join in the interfaith celebration of National Donor Sabbath ... another way that United Methodists can help save lives.” (*Resolution #139, The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000*)