

# Religious Beliefs

## Religious Beliefs

The following list of religions provides information on the particular stance with regard to donation and transplantation.

### Amish

**Discussion:** The Amish will consent to transplantation if they believe it is for the well-being of the transplant recipient. The Amish are reluctant however, to donate their organs if the transplant outcomes are questionable.

### Anglican

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** The offering of life to and for others reflects the Christian principle of interdependence within the human community. The role of hospital Chaplains as members of the professional team is vital in the maintenance of the spiritual and human dimensions for the organ transplant process.

### Australian Aboriginal

**Discussion:** A single statement cannot be given as the Aboriginal population is made up of a number of individual communities.

### Baha'i Faith

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** There is nothing in the Baha'i teaching which forbids donation. The guardian of the Baha'i faith has stated "..... it seems a noble thing to do".

### Baptist

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** Organ donation is encouraged and supported as it is seen as an act of charity. The Church however, leaves the decision to donate up to the individual.

### Brethren

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

### Buddhism

**Donation:** This is a matter of individual choice

**Transplantation:** Buddhist teaching on the middle path i.e. the avoiding of extremes, may be applicable to these points. What is medicine to one may be poison to another. Buddhist's believe that organ/tissue donation is a matter of individual conscience and place high value on acts of compassion. Reverend Gyomay Masao, President and Founder of the Buddhist temple of Chicago, says "We honour those 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.

**Discussion:** The Theravadan Buddhists believe that organ donation

is a matter of individual conscience. The Mahayanist Buddhists believe that even though one has stopped breathing at the time of death, consciousness may remain in the body for up to 3 years, depending on the individual's karma. If however, one is involved in a fatal car accident, then they believe that consciousness abruptly and instantly leaves the body at the time of death.

### Catholic Church

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** "Transplantation presupposes a prior, explicit, free and conscious decision on the part of the donor, generally the closest relatives. It is a decision to offer, without reward, a part of one's own body for the health and well being of another person. We should rejoice that medicine, in its service of life has found in organ transplantation a new way of serving the human family". (Pope John Paul II in an address to the Society of Organ Sharing, Rome, 20 June, 1991.) "I am confident that social, political and educational leaders will renew their commitment to fostering a genuine culture of generosity and solidarity. 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." (Address of John Paul II to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society, August 2000).

### Christian Scientists

**Donation:** Individual Decision

**Transplantation:** Individual Decision

**Discussion:** The Church of Christ Scientist doesn't have a specific position regarding organ donation. Christian Scientists rely on spiritual instead of medical means of healing. They are free, however, to choose whatever medical form of treatment they desire - including transplantation. Organ and tissue donation is an individual decision.

### Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' (Mormons)

**Donation:** Individual Decision

**Transplantation:** Individual Decision

**Discussion:** 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 weight 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 favour of organ and tissue donation."

### Episcopal

**Discussion:** The Episcopal Church passed a resolution in 1982 that recognises the life-giving benefits of organ, blood and tissue donation. All Christians are encouraged to become organ, blood and tissue donors.

### Greek Orthodox Church

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** The Greek Orthodox Church has no objection, whether doctrinal or moral, to the transplantation of organs on medical advice. The reception and donation of organs for this purpose reveal

think traditionally, others will reject tradition, but the majority will lie somewhere in between. The most important consideration is that full discussion and consultation be carried out with the family and members of their land.

a

profound  
act of loving  
solidarity and  
sacrifice among  
human persons.

#### Gypsies

**Donation:**

Generally opposed

**Transplantation:**

Generally opposed

**Discussion:** Gypsies believe that for one year after a person dies, the soul retraces its steps. All of the parts of the body must be intact because the soul maintains a physical shape.

#### Hinduism

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** The Hindu religion is based on the "Law of Karma" and reincarnation. The soul lives forever, is immortal and gets reborn in a new physical form. There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that part of the dead human body, cannot be used to alleviate the suffering of other humans.

#### Islam

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** In 1983, The Moslem Religious Council initially rejected organ donation by followers of Islam, but it has reversed its position, provided donors consent in writing prior to death. The organs of Moslem donors must be transplanted immediately. The religion strongly believes in the principle of saving human life. The majority of the Moslem scholars belonging to various schools of Islamic Law have invoked the principle of priority of saving lives and have permitted the organ transplant as a necessity to procure that noble end.

#### Jehovah's Witness

**Donation:** Individual decision

**Transplantation:** Individual decision

**Discussion:** According to the Watch Tower Society, the legal corporation for the religion, Jehovah's Witness do not encourage organ donation, but believe it is a matter for individual conscience. Although the group is often assumed to ban transplantation because of its taboo against blood transfusion, it does not oppose donating or receiving organs. All organs and tissues, however, must be completely drained of blood before transplantation.

#### Judaism

**Donation:** Individual Decision

**Transplantation:** Individual Decision

**Discussion:** All four branches of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist) support and encourage donation. In 1991, the Rabbinical Council (orthodox) approved organ donations as permissible, even required, from brain-dead patients. Both the Reform and Conservative movements also have policy statements strongly supporting donation. Given the complicated issue, and the number of factors that need to be taken into account, it would always be advisable for the parties involved to speak to their Rabbi if circumstances permit.

#### Lutheran Church

**Discussion:** The Lutheran Church does not oppose organ or tissue donation. The Lutheran Church believes that the decision to donate one's organs and/or tissues should be left up to the individual.

#### Maori

**Donation:** Individual decision

**Transplantation:** Individual decision

**Discussion:** Maori people must be treated as individuals. Some will

#### Protestant

**Discussion:** Protestants encourage and endorse organ donation. The Protestant faith respects an individual's conscience and a person's right to make decisions regarding his or her own body.

#### Pentecostal

**Discussion:** Pentecostals believe that the decision to donate one's organs and tissues donation should be left up to the individual.

#### Presbyterian Church

**Discussion:** Presbyterians encourage and support donation. They respect a person's right to make decisions regarding their own body. During their General Assembly in 1995, they wrote strong support of donation and commented that they "encourage its members and friends to sign and carry universal donor cards...."

#### Reformed Church of Australia

**Donation:** Acceptable except in dependant minors

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** There is no biblical or principle objections to donation and transplantation for therapeutic purposes.

#### Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** It is essential that the rights of all individuals are respected and that free and informed consent be obtained from the next of kin. The giving of human organs makes possible a richer life and alleviation of suffering of others.

#### Seventh Day Adventist Church

**Donation:** Individual decision

**Transplantation:** Individual decision

**Discussion:** Although transplant procedures are carried out at many Seventh Day Adventist health care institutions around the world, the church has made no formal declaration regarding organ donation and transplantation.

#### Shinto

**Donation:** Not acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable to some

**Discussion:** In Shinto, the dead 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...the Japanese regard it in the sense of injuring a dead body." It is often unacceptable by the Shinto religion.

#### Unitarian Universalist

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** When the patient and physicians believe that such operations will be beneficial to the patient and when the donor is not harmed, we affirm that guidance.

#### Uniting Church in Australia (Synod of Victoria)

**Donation:** Acceptable

**Transplantation:** Acceptable

**Discussion:** We recommend that members of the Uniting Church be encouraged to volunteer to become organ donors and that those who are willing to become organ donors take appropriate action to make their wishes known. Most important of all is to have frank and specific discussions within the family, so that other members of the family, specifically next of kin, understand the wishes of the person.

#### Wesleyan Church

**Discussion:** The Wesleyan Church supports donation as a way of helping others. They believe that God's "ability to resurrect us is not dependent on whether or not all our parts were connected at death."