



Religious Views on Organ Donation and Transplantation

These are the positions of various religious sects on donation and transplantation.

AME & ZION AME (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.

ASSEMBLY OF GOD – The Church has no official policy regarding donation and leaves the decision to donate up to the individual. Organ and tissue donation is highly supported by the denomination.

BAPTIST – The church leaves the decision up to the individual and donation is supported as an act of charity.

BUDDHISM – Buddhists believe that organ/tissue 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 – Catholics view organ/tissue donation as an act of charity, love and self-sacrifice. Organ/tissue donation is morally and ethically acceptable. 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 SCIENCE – Christian Scientists normally rely on spiritual means of healing instead of medical. They are free, however, to choose whatever form of medical treatment they desire, including transplant.

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 donors “as part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave his life in its fullness.”

GREEK ORTHODOX – The Church supports donation as a way to better human life in the form of transplantation that would lead to improvements in the treatment and prevention of disease.

HINDUISM – Hindus are not prohibited by religious law from donating their tissues and organs. This act is an individual’s decision. According to H. L. Trivedi in *Transplanting Proceedings*, “There is nothing in the Hindu religion indicating that parts of humans could not be used to alleviate the sufferings of other humans.”

INDEPENDENT CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL – Generally, Evangelicals have no opposition to organ and tissue donation. Each church is autonomous and leaves the decision to donate up to the individual.

ISLAM – The religion of Islam strongly believes in the principle of saving human lives. According to A. Sachedina in *Transplanting 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 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 organs and tissues before being transplanted.

JUDAISM – All four branches of Judaism support and encourage donation. According to Orthodox Rabbi Moses Tendler, "If one is in a 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 human being', also includes donation of corneas, since eyesight restoration is considered a lifesaving operation."

LUTHERAN – 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."

MORMON (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) – Mormons believe the decision to donate is an individual one made in conjunction with family, medical personnel, and prayer. They do not oppose donation.

PRESBYTERIAN – Presbyterians encourage and support donation. They respect a person's right to make decisions regarding their own body.

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.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST – Organ/tissue donation is widely supported by Unitarian Universalist. They view it as an act of love and selfless giving.

UNITED METHODIST – The Church issued a policy statement saying that 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...as a part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave His life in its fullness."

AMISH – The Amish will consent to transplantation if they know that it is for the health and welfare of the transplant recipient. They would be reluctant to donate their organs if the transplant outcome was known to be questionable. John Hostetler, an authority on Amish religion, says in his book *Amish Society*, that "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, anesthesia, hospitalization, dental work, blood transfusions, and immunization."

MENNONITE – There is no prohibition against donation and transplantation in the Mennonite faith. Church officials state such decisions are individual ones.

QUAKERS – Officials for the Quaker faith do not oppose organ donation and transplantation. The decision, they say, is an individual one.