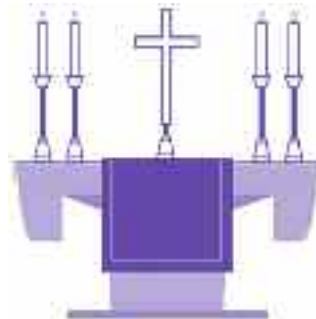


Christianity and Organ Donation

A guide to organ donation
and Christian beliefs





Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved each year by organ transplants. Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and nurses are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by a doctor or doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs come from people who die from a severe brain injury and who receive treatment on a ventilator in an intensive care unit. The brain injury damages vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. No one can live once these centres have been destroyed. Tests can show conclusively when this has happened.

In some circumstances, patients who die in hospital but are not on a ventilator may also donate. They are called non-heartbeating donors.

Sometimes people who do not die in hospital can become tissue donors.

Consent

The consent, or lack of objection, of those closest to the patient is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important for people to discuss their wishes with their loved ones. Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

Care and respect

The removal of organs is carried out with the greatest care and respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Christianity and organ donation

The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Throughout his life Jesus taught people to love one another and he proved his love for the world upon the cross. It seems in keeping with this that Christians consider organ donation as a genuine act of love and a way of following Jesus' example. This act of love then becomes part of a Christian discipleship or faith journey that is motivated by compassion to help someone else and demonstrates a sense of social responsibility.

Sacrifice and helping others are consistent themes in Christianity, which teaches the principle of seeking for others what you hope others would do for you. Enabling life to be lived as fully as possible is consistent with the teaching of the Son of God, Jesus Christ:

"...freely you have received, freely give"

Matthew, chapter 10:8

Christians should be encouraged to help others in need. Discussing organ donation with family and friends is a responsible and thoughtful act.

"I hope that Christian people will seriously and positively consider organ donation. The ready willingness to donate an organ is a clear sign of that sacrificial self-giving for others patterned by Jesus Christ."

✠David Ebor: Archbishop of York

"Every organ transplant has its source in a decision of great ethical value...Here lies the nobility of a gesture which is a genuine act of love. There is a need to instil in people's hearts a genuine and deep love that can find expression in the decision to become an organ donor."

His Holiness Pope John Paul II

"Any act that can save life, such as organ donation, is a great thing and quite acceptable within our faith."

Council of African & Afro-Caribbean Churches (UK)

"The Methodist Church has consistently supported organ donation and transplantation in appropriate circumstances, as a means through which healing and health may be made possible."

Methodist Church UK



“Christians should generally be encouraged to help others in need and organ donation can be a very concrete and sacrificial way of helping”

The Right Reverend Michael Nazir-Ali
Bishop of Rochester

Organ donation the gift of life

Today more than 10,000 people in the UK need an organ transplant which could save or dramatically improve their lives. Most are waiting for a kidney, others for a heart, lung or liver transplant.

Please join the NHS Organ Donor Register and tell family and friends about your wishes.

Join the NHS Organ Donor Register Online at:

www.organdonation.nhs.uk
by phoning 0300 123 23 23
or text SAVE to 84118

Transplants save lives

Information on Christianity is available from:
www.bbc.co.uk/religion

