

widely information on the cultural risk factors for kidney disease keeps people informed, assists in breaking barriers and engendering hope as people make better health choices which will positively impact their life.”

Sharon Platt-McDonald, Director for Health, Women Ministries & Disability Awareness for the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in the British Isles

To donate your organs is a very personal choice. The process of transplantation is acceptable in terms of moral Christian law. The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2296 explains:

“...organ transplants are in conformity with the moral law if the physical and psychological dangers and risks to the donor are proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity.

“It is not morally acceptable if the donor or his proxy has not given explicit consent. Moreover, it is not morally admissible to bring about the disabling mutilation or death

of a human being, even in order to delay the death of other persons.”

As Christians we believe in eternal life and preparing for death should not be a source of fear. Nothing that happens to our body, before or after death, can impact on our relationship with God:

“Neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 8:38-9

Ensuring that we are on the NHS Organ Donor Register and that our relatives know our wishes in advance will help to relieve our loved ones of anxiety if the opportunity to donate arises, because:

“Giving organs is the most generous act of self-giving imaginable”

Rt Revd Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales, 2011

“There is a need to instil 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.”

Pope John Paul II, address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society, 2000

“Over the past year or so, the Department of Health has supported a project which encourages UK faith communities and faith representatives to raise

awareness about organ donation. The aim of the project is not only to explore faith-based perspectives towards organ donation but also to harness the potential of faith communities to address an important social issue. Faith communities have strong social networks and share common values of helping others; it is entirely appropriate that the Church of England has supported this initiative.”

Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle and lead bishop on healthcare issues for the Church of England



#### How do I become a donor?

If you decide you would like to become a donor on your death, you need to join the NHS Organ Donor Register to ensure your wishes are recorded. Discuss your decision with those closest to you so that they are aware of your wishes. Adding your name to the register is simple and quick:

You can register online at [organdonationni.info](http://organdonationni.info)

Or call **0300 123 23 23**

To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit [organdonationni.info](http://organdonationni.info)

# Organ donation and religious beliefs



## A guide to organ donation and Christian beliefs

# Christianity and organ donation

## 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 or improved 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 heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

## Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than before now suffer from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow that person could be someone you know and love dearly. So please take the time to think about becoming an organ

donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

## Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

## When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and their colleagues 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 doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs in the UK come from people who die from a severe brain injury, and who are on a ventilator in an Intensive Care Unit. The brain injury will have damaged the vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. Doctors call this 'brain stem death'. This is not the same as

being in a coma or 'persistent vegetative state'. Tests are carried out to strict guidelines to show conclusively when this has happened. When brain stem death is pronounced the patient may still be on a ventilator, and have a heart beat which continues to circulate blood around the body. This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply which is necessary for a healthier transplanted outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people whose death has been certified because their heart has stopped. Certification in these 'non-heart beating' donors is also by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

## Care and respect

The removal of organs and tissues 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.

## Organ donation and Christianity

The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught people to love one another, and to embrace the needs of others. Organ donation can be considered by Christians as a genuine act of love.

We can choose to donate our organs to save the lives of many people:

**"Thousands of people in the UK today are waiting for an organ transplant that could save or dramatically improve their lives. The simple act of joining the donors' register can help make the world of difference to those in need. I hope that everyone will consider whether they can give life to others after their own death."**

† Sentamu Ebor, Archbishop of York, 2010

**"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

**"Identifying specific faith groups and their beliefs and practice around organ donation provides a basis for discussion. We then need to share information on what faith groups believe in order to foster better understanding of cultural norms. Disseminating more**

**"In eternity we will neither have nor need our earthly bodies: former things will pass away, all things will be made new."**

Revelation 21:4,5

