

“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 is a great gift but more donors are needed

Everyone can make a difference
Please

- Talk to your family
- Register your wishes
- Carry a donor card

To find out more about organ donation, or to join the NHS Organ Donor Register, contact:

The Organ Donor Line
0845 60 60 400
www.uktransplant.org.uk

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

Transplants save lives



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 Lord demonstrated with his own life how, even in sorrow, love enables us to embrace the needs of others. We can choose to donate our organs to save the lives of many people. The decision to donate at the end of life is the beginning of healing for many others.

Healing and saving life is a great gift. Jesus sent his twelve disciples out with the imperative to heal disease and illness.

"Heal the sick...freely you have received, freely give."

Matthew chapter 10:8

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

Revelation chapter 21:4,5

"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

