

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

**Minutes of the 207th General Assembly - 1995**  
**Overture 95-47 On Organ Donations**

Whereas, Almighty God in his infinite wisdom has permitted the modern day miracle of organ transplants; and

Whereas, an essential part of this miracle is the donation of organs, often at a time of great stress and trauma to family members; and

Whereas, we as followers of Christ are especially called to be good stewards of what God has provided; therefore, be it

*Resolved*, That the Presbytery of the Cascades overture the 207th General Assembly (1995) to encourage its members and friends to sign and carry Universal Donor Cards and that

1. those called to provide pastoral care receive training and materials to help families make informed decisions concerning organ donation;
2. the Presbyterian Church (USA) incorporate, where appropriate, materials on organ donation in its curriculum and stewardship materials;
3. the church at all levels be encouraged to evaluate and comment on the advances in organ transplantation in the light of Christian Scripture.

## CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM

### **The Rabbinical Assembly - May 1990**

WHEREAS consideration for the health and welfare for others is at the heart of Jewish ethics, and

WHEREAS the committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly has approved the donation of some organs, and

WHEREAS organ and tissue donation is a life-giving act, since transplantation of organs and tissues is scientifically proven as a way to save the lives of persons with terminal diseases or to improve the quality of lives for the blind, the deaf and others with life-threatening diseases, and

WHEREAS the opportunity to bring healing and hope to an afflicted person by the family of a person who died an otherwise senseless death may provide a deep measure of comfort to said family, and

WHEREAS those who did not receive organ and tissue donations continue to suffer and die due to lack of consent for donation, due primarily to poor awareness and lack of an official direction from their religious leaders,

Therefore Be It Resolved that the Rabbinical Assembly affirms the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation, and thereby encourages all Conservative Jews to become enrolled as organ and tissue donors by signing and carrying cards or driver s licenses attesting to their commitment of such organs and tissues upon their deaths to those in need.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH - MISSOURI SYNOD

**Resolution 8-05: To Encourage Donation of Kidneys and Other Organs - 1981**

WHEREAS, We accept and believe that our Lord Jesus came to give life and to give it abundantly (John 10:10); and

WHEREAS, Through advances in medical science we are aware that at the time of death some of our organs can be transplanted to alleviate pain and suffering of afflicted human beings (see Gal 6:10); and

WHEREAS, Our heavenly Father has created us so that we can adequately and safely live with one kidney and can express our love and relieve the unnecessary prolonged suffering of our relative; and

WHEREAS, We have an opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs; therefore be it

Resolved, That our pastors, teachers and DCEs be encouraged to inform the members of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod of the opportunity to sign a Universal Organ Donor Card (which is to authorize the use of our needed organs at the time of death in order to relieve the suffering of individuals requiring organ transplants); and be it further

Resolved, That we encourage family members to become living kidney donors, and be it further

Resolved, That the program committees of pastors and teachers conferences be encouraged to include organ and tissue transplants as a topic on their agendas; and be it finally

Resolved, That the Board for Social Ministry Services seek ways to implement this program so that the entire Synod may join in this opportunity to express Christian concern.

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

**Annual Conference - June 1993  
Resolution on Organ and Tissue Donation**

- Whereas: We accept and believe that our Lord Jesus came to give life and give it abundantly; and
- Whereas: Consideration for the health and welfare of others is at the heart of the Christian ethic; and
- Whereas: Thousands of people who could benefit from organ and tissue donation continue to suffer and die due to lack of consent to donation; and
- Whereas: Organ and tissue donation is a life-giving act, since transplantation of organs and tissues is medically proven to extend the lives of persons and improve their quality of life; and
- Whereas: Organ donation may be a positive outcome of a seemingly senseless death and can be comforting to the family of the deceased and is conducted with respect and with the highest consideration for maintaining the dignity of the deceased and his/her family; and
- Whereas: We have the opportunity to help others out of love for Christ, through the donation of organs and tissues,

Therefore, be it resolved, that the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference at its meeting in Indianapolis, Indiana, June 22-27, 1993, commits itself and urges Church of the Brethren congregations, institutions, and members to:

1. Inform and educate themselves by taking advantage of resources within their region as to organ and tissue donation;
2. Support and encourage individuals to be in discussion with clergy and family as to their wishes regarding the use of their organs and/or tissue for transplantation upon death;
3. Encourage and support individuals to include within their Advanced Medical Directives instructions as to their wishes for organ and tissue donation. This may include the signing and carrying of a Universal Organ Donor Card;
4. Support those living donors who, with prayerful consideration, make an organ or tissue gift, provided that such a gift does not deprive the donor of life itself nor the functional integrity of his/her body;

5. Encourage our clergy to prepare themselves to respond to the special needs of family and friends at the time of organ and tissue procurement.

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

**Policy Statement on Organ and Tissue Donation - 1984**

WHEREAS, selfless consideration for the health and welfare of others is at the heart of the Christian ethic; and

WHEREAS, organ and tissue donation is a life-giving act, since transplantation of organs and tissues is scientifically proven to save the lives of persons with terminal diseases and improve the quality of life for the blind, the deaf and others with life-threatening diseases; and

WHEREAS, organ donation may be perceived as a positive outcome of a seemingly senseless death and is comforting to the family of the deceased and is conducted with respect, and with the highest consideration for maintaining the dignity of the deceased and his/her family; and

WHEREAS, moral leaders the world over recognize organ and tissue donation as an expression of humanitarian ideals in giving life to another; and

WHEREAS, thousands of persons who could benefit from organ and tissue donation continue to suffer and die due to lack of consent for donation, due primarily to poor awareness and lack of an official direction from the church;

*Be It Resolved*, 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 by signing and carrying cards or driver s licenses, attesting to their commitment of such organs upon their death, to those in need, as a part of their ministry to others in the name of Christ, who gave his life that we might have life in its fullness.

## WESLEYAN CHURCH

### **Excerpt from Position Paper on Issues Related to Death and Dying - Page 5 Task Force on Public Morals and Social Concerns - August 1989**

#### DONATION OF BODY PARTS

There seems no scriptural reason not to make body parts available for helping others. As Discipline 124 states, the raised body will be a spiritual body. Our resurrection is in the hands of the Omnipotent, and His ability to resurrect us is not dependent on whether or not all our parts were connected at death. Although Discipline 131:5, 16 were not written explicitly to cover donating body parts to others, the scriptural principles behind these paragraphs apply to donation of body parts. What is said about body parts also applies to the total dead body. One of the ways that a Christian can do good is to request that their body be donated to a medical school for use in teaching.

# ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

## **Pope John Paul II**

### **Encyclical: For a New Culture of Human Life (Par. 86) March 25, 1995**

Over and above such outstanding moments, there is an everyday heroism, made up of gestures of sharing, big and small, which build up an authentic culture of life. A particularly praiseworthy example of such gestures is the donation of organs, performed in an ethically acceptable manner, with a view to offering a chance of health and even life itself to the sick who sometimes have no hope.

### **Blood and Organ Donors (August 2, 1984), *The Pope Speaks*, 30:no.1, 1985, pp. 1-2.**

Above all, I appreciate the purpose which has united and mobilized you: namely, to promote and encourage such a noble and meritorious act as donating your own blood or an organ to those of your brothers and sisters who have need of it. Such a gesture is the more laudable in that you are motivated, not by a desire for earthly gain or ends, but by a generous impulse of the heart, by human and Christian solidarity - the love of neighbor, which forms the inspiring motive of the Gospel message, and which has been defined, indeed, as the new commandment.

In giving blood or an organ of your body, may you always have this human and religious perspective: may your gesture be made as an offering to the Lord, who identified himself with those who suffer, either by sickness, accidents on the highway, or mishaps at work. May it be a gift made to the suffering Lord, who in his passion gave himself completely and poured out His blood for the salvation of mankind.

If you also include this supernatural intention, your humanitarian gesture, already so noble in itself, will be elevated and transformed into a splendid testimony of Christian faith, and your merit will certainly not be lost . . .

**Many Ethical, Legal, and Social Questions Must Be Examined in Greater Depth  
(June 20, 1991), *Dolentium Hominum*, Vatican Press, 1992, n. 3, pp. 12-13.**

With the advent of organ transplantation, which began with blood transfusions, man has found a way to give of himself, of his blood and of his body, so that others may continue to live. Thanks to science, and to the professional training and commitment of doctors and healthcare workers, whose collaboration is less obvious but no less indispensable for the outcome of complicated surgical operations, new and wonderful challenges are presented. We are challenged to love our neighbor in new ways; in evangelical terms, to love to the end (John 13:1), yet within certain limits which cannot be exceeded, limits laid down by human nature itself.

Above all, this form of treatment is inseparable from a human act of donation. In effect, transplantation presupposes a prior, explicit, free and conscious decision on the part of the donor or of someone who legitimately represents 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. In this sense, the medical action of transplantation makes possible the donor's act of self-giving, that sincere gift of self which expresses our constitutive calling to love and communion.

## ORTHODOX JUDAISM

### **Rabbinical Council of America - 1991 A Torah Perspective Regarding the Health Care Proxy**

The saving of a life takes precedence over all but three halachic imperatives - murder, idolatry and adultery. Accordingly, no barriers exist to donation of the organs of the deceased if they are obtained in accord with the halacha, which mandates the highest standards of respect for human dignity. Vital organs such as heart and liver may be donated after the patient has been declared dead by a competent neurologist based upon the clinical and/or radiological evidence. In accord with the ruling of Harav Hagaon Moshe Feinstein, z tl and of the chief rabbinate of Israel, brain stem death, together with other accepted neurological criteria, fully meets the standards of halacha for determining death.

Since organs that can be life-saving may be donated, the family is urged to do so. When human life can be saved, it must be saved. Cornea transplants that can restore sight to the blind are also treated in halacha as life-saving. The halacha therefore looks with great favor on those who facilitate the procurement of life-saving organ donations.

## REFORM JUDAISM

**Union of American Hebrew Congregations  
Department of Jewish Family Concerns  
Rabbi Richard F. Address, Director  
Committee on Bioethics - June 3, 1997**

The Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), through its Committee on Bioethics, is committed to the concept of Organ Donation and Transplantation as a positive example of the traditional Jewish value of Pikuach nefesh (the saving of a life).

Through the development of the UAHC's Matan Chaim (The Gift of Life) program, the UAHC has been able to develop programmatic and educational material for use in its member congregations which illustrate and promulgate involvement in issues of Organ Donation and Transplantation.

The mood of Reform Judaism, through its rabbinical (Central Conference of American Rabbis) and congregational (Union of American Hebrew Congregations) arms reflects the idea, based upon our understanding of Jewish tradition and values; that involvement in this issue is, in truth, a contemporary Mitzvah.