

SHARING THE GIFT OF LIFE

A Resource Guide for Faith Leaders on Organ, Eye,
and Tissue Donation and National Donor Sabbath.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Health Resources and Services Administration
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Sharing the Gift of Life

What do you tell the people who turn to you for advice?

Life—it is the greatest gift of all. And today, it is also a gift that can be shared.

Through organ, eye, and tissue donation, people have the potential to reach out and do good in this world. They can save the lives of those who would die without help. They can give new hope to their families. They can transform and improve lives, by restoring sight, health, and wholeness.

It is one of the greatest opportunities today for those who seek to do good, pass along life, and help their fellow human beings.

Choosing to become an organ donor reflects one's deepest beliefs about the sanctity and importance of life. Some find it an easy decision; others want to be assured they're doing the right thing by their faith. And so they look to you for counsel.

Members of your community may have already sought your advice as a faith leader for inspiration, guidance, and even approval in this decision. They may be unsure about how their faith views donation. Others may need your support and counsel in making the decision to donate the organs of a loved one who did not make a donation designation while alive. Others may enlist your help with spreading the word about sharing the gift of life.

What are OPOs?

Non-profit organ procurement organizations (OPOs) are the vital link between donors and recipients. They coordinate organ donation activities including: evaluating potential donors, obtaining authorization for donation, interacting with a donor's family members, and arranging for the donation process (recovering and transporting donated organs). They also conduct outreach efforts to encourage the public to register as donors (p. 8).

There are 58 federally designated OPOs, each serving a specific area of the United States. To identify your local OPO, check online at organdonor.gov.

This guide was created to help you help others. Here, you can learn more about organ, eye, and tissue donation and National Donor Sabbath. You can learn about ways you can encourage and support your congregation to make informed donation decisions, and about groups you can call for help, such as organ procurement organizations (OPOs).

We hope you will participate in National Donor Sabbath to help your congregation make informed life decisions and possibly turn suffering into survival.



Kelly Olmo
Liver Recipient
Pleasanton, CA

When Kelly Olmo was 2 years old, she became seriously ill and needed a life-saving liver transplant. Kelly's Japanese-American mother Cathy explains, "It has been 21 years since Kelly received her gift of life through a perfect stranger ... a hero in our eyes. This family said 'yes' to donation when their own child died. They were able to look beyond their own grief and help someone else."

According to Cathy, "It's important to sign up to be a donor and discuss your wishes with your family. You never know whose life you might be saving—it might be another child like Kelly!"

Photo provided by the family of Kelly Olmo and used with their permission.

National Donor Sabbath: A Special Opportunity to Make a Difference

For more than 15 years, the weekend in November two weeks before Thanksgiving has held a special significance—it's National Donor Sabbath.

National Donor Sabbath is a time when leaders of all faiths and denominations are invited to join together with organ, eye, and tissue donation professionals and organizations and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, to bring attention to the precious gift of donation.

During this 3-day weekend (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday) you, as a faith leader, have a special opportunity to involve members of your own community and educate them about sharing the gift of life through organ donation. It's a time when you can make a real difference for the more than 123,000 people waiting for transplants.*

In this guide, you'll find information to help you participate, including, examples of how others have successfully incorporated the theme of donation into their services, an overview of many religions' positions on donation, answers to frequently asked questions, and more.

*As of April 2015

The Need Is Urgent

More than 123,000 people in the United States are waiting for life-saving transplants.*

A single organ donor has the potential to save the lives of up to eight people. And through tissue donation, a donor can improve the lives of many more.

Donors of all ages and ethnicities are needed—and the need is great. All that is lacking are enough donors willing to pass along the gift of life.

National Donor Sabbath will be observed on the following weekends in the next several years:

November 13 - 15, 2015
November 11 - 13, 2016
November 10 - 12, 2017
November 9 - 11, 2018



Christina Janis
Cornea Recipient
Kyle, SD

Sharing is a way of life for Lakota communities and families and celebrates a deep spiritual link they have with one another. Because of the generosity of a cornea donor, things are much clearer for Christina Janis since her first cornea transplant in 2004. For many years, Christina's vision was deteriorating from eye disease—even glasses could not help her see clearly. A donated cornea restored Christina's sight. She had a second cornea transplant in 2005, and now enjoys being even more active in the outdoors. Christina says, "The giving of oneself is just the ultimate way of saying thank you for being created."

Photo provided by Christina Janis and used with her permission.



Manuel Salazar

Tissue Recipient
Denver, CO

In just one instant, Manuel Salazar's life was changed forever when a downed power line struck him and sent 115,000 volts of electricity through his body. It was a miracle he survived. However, he lost both arms and legs as a result of burns. The Denver Center for Extremities at Risk used human bone from a donor to build Manuel a new shoulder that could be fitted with a prosthetic.

Today, because of the donated tissue and prosthetics, Manuel drives, skis, water-skis, and owns an auto body shop. "Now I am just thankful to be alive," he says, "I want to try new things. I see life in a whole new way."

Photo provided by Manuel Salazar and used with his permission.

About National Donor Sabbath

Q: What is it? When is it?

A: National Donor Sabbath is a time for faith leaders of all denominations across America to alert their communities to the pressing need for organ, eye, and tissue donations to save lives. It takes place two weekends before Thanksgiving (Friday–Sunday, in order to include the day of worship for most religions). The specific dates for the next several years are listed on page 2 of this brochure.

Q: Who supports it?

A: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration participates in National Donor Sabbath together with national, state, and local donation organizations, faith communities, health providers, community organizations, and concerned individuals for the purpose of public education and organ donation awareness.* National Donor Sabbath is a nationwide event and there is no cost to participate.

*HHS does not provide financial support for this event.

Q: Why is my participation important?

A: Your participation is particularly important because people look to their faith leaders for guidance on serious decisions in their lives. Faith leaders of all religious denominations, along with other community leaders, can build awareness and help increase organ donation sign-up by participating in National Donor Sabbath and holding donor enrollment events throughout the year.

Q: What can I do to participate?

A: Raise the subject of organ, eye, and tissue donation with your congregation and provide members with a clear statement about the position of your religion. Beyond that, there are a great many things you can do (some are outlined on the following pages) to help provide information and contribute to informed decision making.

Q: Where can I learn more?

A: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides more information about donation at organdonor.gov. This site will guide you to other information sources, such as Donate Life America (donatelife.net) and organ procurement organizations (OPOs), which can provide local assistance. Also, view the list of organizations and associations provided at the end of this guide.

Q: Is there information specific to my religion?

A: A list of the known positions of some religions in America is included in this booklet. If you are not already aware of how your particular religion views organ donation (both for living and deceased donors), we hope this guide will inspire you to find out and share the knowledge with members of your faith.

How Can Faith Leaders Support Donation and National Donor Sabbath?

Some individuals in your congregation may not know what your religion's position is concerning donation, or they may simply not have considered the good they can do through donation.

As a faith leader, you can help them find the answers. Knowing your religion's position concerning donation should help members of your faith community make an informed decision about registering to be organ donors.

Here are some ways in which faith leaders can reach out to communities to invigorate participation in donation and educate their congregations about passing along the gift of life.

Provide a clear statement.

Please share your religion's position on organ, eye, and tissue donation. Many people in your congregation or community would welcome having this information. (A number of faiths' positions can be found on pages 5, 6, and 7 of this brochure.)

Share the need and urgency.

Members of your congregation may be unaware of the great need for donors. You can educate them about their ability to enhance and save the lives of people waiting for transplants.

Hold a candle-lighting or other appropriate ceremony to honor those who have donated the gift of life, including both living and deceased donors.

Host a prayer breakfast or other appropriate event to recognize the men, women, and children in our country who are currently waiting for an organ or tissue donation.

Offer support to patients waiting for a transplant.

Encourage members of your congregation to do so as well. Find out the best ways you can help—from visiting, to transportation, to assistance for their families.

Address the subject in sermons, prayers, and homilies.

On National Donor Sabbath, and at other times during the year, many faith leaders include the subject of donation in their sermons and prayers. The concept of giving to others—even after one's own life has come to a close—is a compelling and memorable theme. Your local organ procurement organization (OPO) is an excellent resource for relevant religious references and materials.

Share information within your community.

In your congregation, there may be someone who needs a transplant, someone who is a living donor, a family whose loved one was a donor, or someone who has received a transplant. Invite them to share their stories during services. Or, with permission, you might share their stories with your congregation. Their courage would be an inspiring message.

Acknowledge donation at funeral services.

When you know the deceased was an organ donor, it's inspiring to pass along the good this person has done. Ask the family. Your mention of this generous gift and selfless act would be invaluable if even one other life is saved.

Utilize mailings, bulletins, Web sites, and newsletters.

Place stories, quotes, and notices about donation and National Donor Sabbath in your mailings or newsletter. Referencing an organ, eye, or tissue donor or transplant recipient in your own community adds special significance. Contact your local OPO for articles and stories.

Share in faith education classes and study groups.

Education and study groups are excellent places to share the importance of organ donation—what it can mean to the donor's family as well as to recipients and their families. If your faith community is affiliated with a school, consider including donation education in classes such as health, life sciences, or social studies.

Ask your faith community for volunteers.

You don't have to do it all yourself. You may achieve great success by asking a member of your faith community to lead this effort. Someone may have a personal connection to donation and may want to help observe National Donor Sabbath and increase awareness about donation in any way possible.

The Positions of Some Religious Denominations

In general there has been broad support for organ donation among most faith communities. We understand that there may be differences of opinion even within any particular religious group. Each decision to become a donor is a personal one. We suggest that individuals consult with their faith leader if they have questions about their faith's view of donation. Below is a list of those faith communities for which official statements or policies indicating support for organ donation were identified.

CATHOLICISM

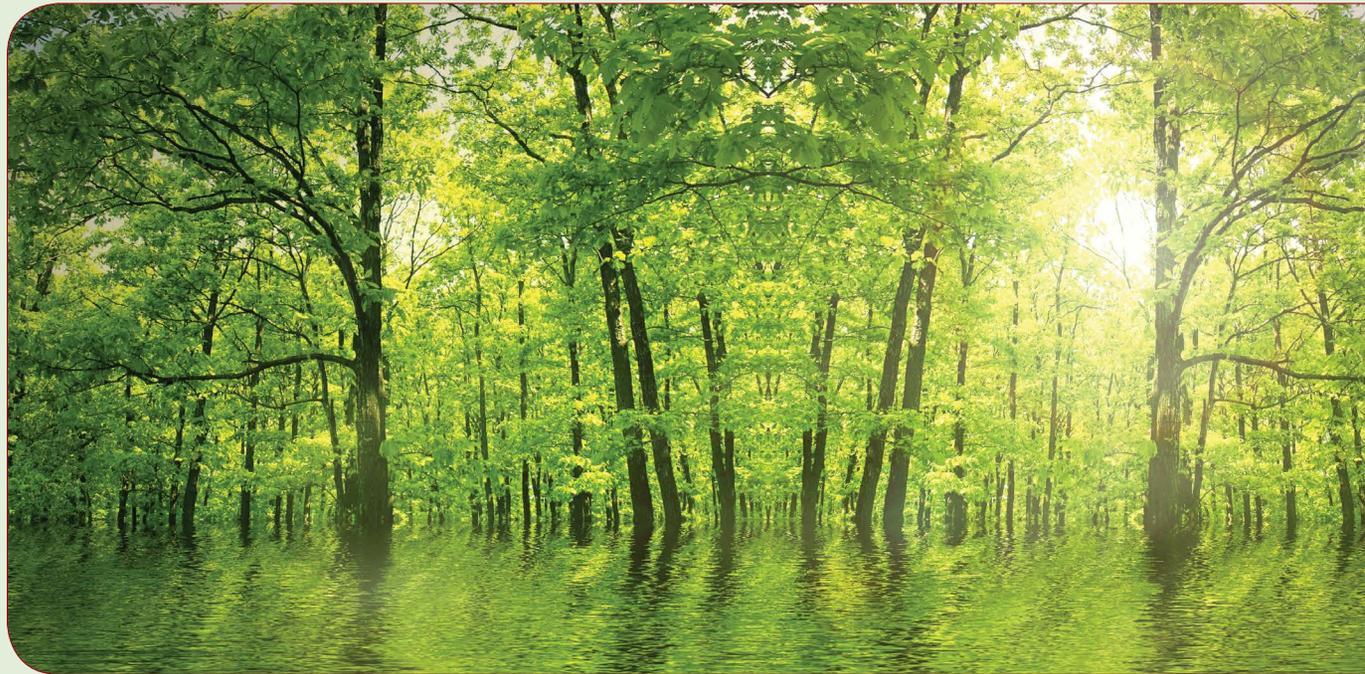
Organ, eye, and tissue donation is considered an act of charity and love, and transplants are morally and ethically acceptable to the Vatican. *(Pope John Paul II, Evangelium Vitae, no. 86)*

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

A 1985 resolution, adopted by the General Assembly, encourages "members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to enroll as organ donors and prayerfully support those who have received an organ transplant." *(Resolution #8548 Concerning Organ Transplants, Des Moines, 1985)*

EPISCOPAL

The 70th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recommends and urges "all members of this Church to consider seriously the opportunity to donate organs after death that others may live, and that such decision be clearly stated to family, friends, church and attorney." *(Resolution #1982-C024 Encourage Christians to Become Organ, Blood, and Tissue Donors, 1982)*



EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

The Evangelical Covenant Church passed a resolution at the Annual Meeting in 1982 encouraging members to sign and carry organ donor cards. The resolution also recommended “that it becomes a policy with our pastors, teachers, and counselors to encourage awareness of organ donation in all our congregations.” (*Commission on Christian Action; Organ Donor Resolution, 1982*)

ISLAM

The Fourth Conference of the Islamic Fiqh Council determined that transplantation offers “clear positive results” if practiced “to achieve the aims of sharee’ah which tries to achieve all that is good and in the best interests of individuals and societies and promotes cooperation, compassion and selflessness.” Provided that “shar’i guidelines and controls that protect human dignity” are met, “It is permissible to transplant an organ from a dead person to a living person whose life or basic essential functions depend on that organ, subject to

the condition that permission be given by the deceased before his death, or by his heirs after his death ...”

Regarding living donation, it is permissible to transplant organs such as a kidney and or a lung “in order to keep the beneficiary alive or to keep some essential or basic function of his body working.” (*Resolutions of Islamic Fiqh Council of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Fourth Conference, Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 18-23 Safar 1408 AH/6-11 February 1988 CE*)

JUDAISM

In principal Judaism sanctions and encourages organ, eye, and tissue donation in order to save lives. Rabbi Elliott N. Dorff wrote that saving a life through organ donation supercedes the rules concerning treatment of a dead body. Transplantation does not desecrate a body or show lack of respect for the dead, and any delay in burial to facilitate organ donation is respectful of the decedent. Organ donation saves lives and honors the deceased.

The Conservative Movement’s Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards has stated that organ donations after death represent not only an act of kindness, but are also a “commanded obligation” which saves human lives. (*On Educating Conservative Jews Regarding Organ Donations, May 1996*)



LUTHERAN CHURCH

The Lutheran Church passed a resolution in 1984 stating that donation contributes to the wellbeing 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 legal arrangements, including the use of a signed donor card.”

(Organ Donation: A Resolution of the Lutheran Church in America, 1984)

MORMON

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints recognizes that “the donation of organs and tissues is a selfless act that often results in great benefit to individuals with medical conditions. The decision to will or donate one’s own body organs or tissue for medical purposes, or the decision to authorize the transplant of organs or tissue from a deceased family member, is made by the individual or the deceased member’s family.”

(Handbook 2: 21.3.7)

PRESBYTERIAN

The Presbyterian denominations encourage and endorse donation. It is an individual’s right to make decisions regarding his or her own body. The resolution by one Presbyterian denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), “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 ...”

(Minutes of the 195th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 1983), 97, 846)

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

In 1988, the Southern Baptist Convention resolved that because “resurrection does not depend on body wholeness” and that “organ transplant technology has transformed many lives from certain death to vibrant productivity,” the SBC encourages “voluntarism regarding organ donations in the spirit of stewardship, compassion for the needs of others, and alleviating suffering.”

(Resolution on Human Organ Donations, June, 1988)

UNITED METHODIST

“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,” reports a church policy statement. In a 2000 resolution the Church also “encourages its congregations to join in the interfaith celebration of National Donor Sabbath ... another way that United Methodists can help save lives.”

(Resolution #139, The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2000)



Anne Laumer
Organ Donor
Vadnais Heights, MN

Shortly after her 32nd wedding anniversary, 53-year-old Anne Laumer collapsed from a brain aneurysm. As her family waited in the hospital, they overheard another family decide to donate the organs of their child who had died. Anne's family made the same decision, to realize some good from their tragedy.

Anne's kidneys, liver, heart and eyes helped people to lead better lives. Countless others will benefit from research enabled by her other donated organs. A year later, Anne's widower Ronald met Ruth Lovegren, who had also donated her spouse's organs and eyes. Ronald and Ruth, now married, volunteer on behalf of the Donate Life mission.

Photo provided by the family of Anne Laumer and used with their permission.

Resources and Expert Assistance Are Available Year-Round

Raising the subject of donation is important at any time during the year. Your local organ procurement organization (OPO), Donate Life America chapter, and the Health Resources and Services Administration, Healthcare Systems Bureau, Division of Transplantation, are excellent resources for appropriate support and materials. Here are a few of the ways they can help:

Arrange workshops: Your local OPO will be able to provide information or set up a program for faith community members and their families to discuss this sensitive subject.

Organize donor drives: Your local OPO can help your faith community organize a donor drive that makes it easy for members and others to learn the facts, sign up to become donors, and share their decision with their families.

Provide information and brochures: Your local OPO has brochures and additional information about donation. (Others are available at organdonor.gov.) Printed pieces can be enclosed in bulletins, mailed

to your congregation, or simply be available in a convenient place for members to pick up. Electronic files can be posted to Web sites and emailed to others, or they can be printed.

Provide videos for screenings:

A number of educational videos are available on organdonor.gov. They can be viewed on the Web site and many are also downloadable. Other videos may be available from your local

Donation Services Are Helpful at Any Time

While National Donor Sabbath is observed in November, any time is a good time to hold a donation service or sermon. Feel free to contact your local organ procurement organization for assistance and support throughout the year.

OPO or other donation organizations. Web site links, notices, and information about organ, eye, and tissue donation for your Web site can be found at organdonor.gov.



Aliyah Boatwright

Heart/Coronary Arteries Recipient
Edison, NJ

When Aliyah Boatwright was just a toddler, doctors discovered that her heart was severely damaged and she received her first transplant. Six years later, Aliyah's coronary arteries began to deteriorate, and she underwent another successful transplant.

In 2004, Aliyah's mother LaNaye began suffering problems similar to her daughter's. She also received a new heart through the generosity of a donor. Throughout it all, Aliyah has demonstrated an amazing spirit. Knowing what it is like to have another chance at life, she gives her mom advice and watches over her.

Photo provided by the family of Aliyah Boatwright and used with their permission.

What You Need to Know About Donation

This basic information answers some of the most common questions people have about organ, eye, and tissue donation. If you'd like additional information to pass along to your congregation, feel free to contact your local organ procurement organization or visit **organdonor.gov**.

How to become an organ, eye, and tissue donor:

Enroll in your state's donor registry. Visit **organdonor.gov** or call **866.99DONATE (993.6628)** to learn how to register in your state. Designate your decision on your driver's license. Tell your family and friends—make sure that your family knows your wishes so they can support your decision.

What can be donated:

Deceased donors can donate multiple organs and tissues.

- Organs: heart, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, liver, and small intestine.
- Tissues: corneas, bone, heart valves, connective tissue, skin, and other tissues.
- A kidney, and a lobe of a liver or lung, blood, marrow, peripheral blood stem cells, and umbilical cord blood can be donated by living donors.

Your quality of medical care is the same, whether or not you are a donor:

Signing up as a donor does not affect the quality of medical care you receive in a hospital. The medical team that treats you as a patient is dedicated entirely to saving your life. A separate transplant team is called in once death has been declared or is imminent and this team recovers donated organs.

Traditional funeral arrangements are not affected by donation (but could be slightly delayed):

Organ donation does not interfere with traditional funeral arrangements, including open casket services.

There is no cost to donate:

The donor's family does not pay for the cost of organ, eye, and tissue donation. Costs are covered by the recipient, the recipient's insurance company, Medicare, or Medicaid.

There is no age limit to donation:

People of any age, from infants to people in their 50s, 60s, 70s, and beyond, have been organ donors. The condition of your organs is more important than your age. Even some people with chronic conditions can donate. That is why it is so important for people of any age or health condition to sign up.

Sources for More Information

American Association of Blood Banks

301.907.6977
aabb.org

American Association of Tissue Banks

703.827.9582
aatb.org

American Red Cross (including regional centers)

800.REDCROSS
redcross.org

America's Blood Centers

888.USBLOOD
americasblood.org

Association of Organ Procurement Organizations

703.556.4242
aopo.org

Donate Life America

804.377.3580
donatelife.net

Eye Bank Association of America

202.775.4999
restoresight.org

National Kidney Foundation

800.622.9010
kidney.org

National Marrow Donor Program

800.MARROW2
marrow.org

Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network

optn.transplant.hrsa.gov

Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients

877.970.SRTR
srtr.org

United Blood Services

480.946.4201
unitedbloodservices.org

United Network for Organ Sharing

804.782.4800
unos.org

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Healthcare Systems Bureau, Division of Transplantation

301.443.7577
organdonor.gov

Please Participate in National Donor Sabbath

And help your congregation share the gift of life.

It is natural for individuals and families to turn to their faith leaders, as well as medical professionals, when considering the serious subject of organ, eye, and tissue donation. Your knowledge about the facts of donation and transplants, combined with an understanding of the beliefs of your faith, will enable you to serve your congregation and your community with confidence.

The subject of donation is filled with compassion, courage, and charity. These virtues are of central significance to every religion. This makes it a highly appropriate message to bring to the attention of your faith community.

You can play a part in clearing away myths and misconceptions, help members of your faith make informed life decisions, and turn suffering into survival. That is what you are invited to do by promoting donation during National Donor Sabbath and all year-round.

Contributors:

California Transplant Donor Network, Oakland, CA
South Dakota Lions Eye Bank, Sioux Falls, SD
Allosource, Centennial, CO
LifeSource, Minneapolis, MN
New Jersey Sharing Network, New Providence, NJ

This publication lists non-federal resources in order to provide additional information to consumers. The views and content in these resources have not been formally approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Listing these resources is not an endorsement by HHS or its components.



organdonor.gov
866.99DONATE (866.993.6628)

