



# FAITH RESOURCE GUIDE

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Sharing the Gift of Life  
Through Faith and  
Organ and Tissue Donation

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This resource guide is a collection of materials intended to help inspire, inform, and build awareness of organ and tissue donation among community clergy so that they may share this life-saving message with their congregations and community.



Give thanks. Give life.



## **#DonationNeedsDiversity** to save and enhance lives

### Saving Lives Through Organ and Tissue Donation

To learn more, get involved and register as an organ and tissue donor, visit

**[NJSharingNetwork.org](http://NJSharingNetwork.org)**



A Donate Life Organization

**#DonationNeedsDiversity** honors the generosity of multicultural donors and their families while also underscoring the critical need for people from diverse communities to register as organ and tissue donors.

Learn more at

**[NJSharingNetwork.org/Donation-Needs-Diversity](http://NJSharingNetwork.org/Donation-Needs-Diversity)**

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Dear Friend,

As a double lung transplant recipient, I am a living example of the miracle of organ and tissue donation.

In 2002, without any family history or having smoked a day in my life, I was diagnosed with pulmonary fibrosis. During my darkest days, when I struggled to breathe and came to rely on an oxygen tank, I never faltered in my faith. My church community was always there for me, showering me with prayers, visits, phone calls...anything I needed.

Today, I am blessed to be a Community Services Manager with NJ Sharing Network, whose mission is to save and enhance lives through organ and tissue donation. I am passionate about encouraging faith-based leaders to share information with their members and bring much needed attention to this important cause.

During National Donor Sabbath, observed annually in November, faith leaders throughout the country come together to educate their communities about the critical need for organ and tissue donation, and the vital role their faith plays in making the decision to register as a donor. Most religions support donation and view this gift as the ultimate act of charity and love.

Through NJ Sharing Network, you can receive valuable resources, as well as a speaker such as myself, to share a personal experience in your house of worship. To request a speaker or printed faith-based outreach materials, please contact me at [dpeoples@njsharingnetwork.org](mailto:dpeoples@njsharingnetwork.org) or 973-665-4687. You may also download our Faith Resource Guide at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org/Donor-Sabbath](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org/Donor-Sabbath).

There is no greater gift than the gift of life. I'm a living, breathing example of that. Please prayerfully consider joining NJ Sharing Network during National Donor Sabbath and beyond.

Sincerely,

E. Denise Peoples  
Community Services Manager  
NJ Sharing Network



# Personal Stories and Support from Faith Leaders



**“One of the basic tenets of faith is giving and receiving. Whether you are a person of faith or not, love is something with which we all identify. What happens within the walls of NJ Sharing Network can be recognized as love.”**

**... but the greatest of these is LOVE. — 1 Corinthians 13:13**

*Pastor Hilton Rawls, Jr.  
Greater Grace Church  
East Orange, NJ  
Kidney Recipient*



**“The greatest love that you can give to anyone is to give the gift of life.”**

*Reverend Dr. Vanessa M. Brown  
Rivers of Living Water  
Newark, NJ*



**“We, as Conservative Jews, feel that the donation of life-saving organs is not only permitted by Jewish law, it is encouraged because life is sacred. For this reason, donating an organ to save a life is one of the highest acts of virtue one can do—the ultimate mitzvah.”**

*Max Prince (left) dedicated his mitzvah project to his brother Sam (right), who received a life-saving heart transplant. He formed a team called “Max’s Mitzvah Movers” for NJ Sharing Network’s 5K Celebration of Life to raise funds for organ and tissue donation awareness*

# Facts About Organ and Tissue Donation

- Over 100,000 people are currently waiting for a life-saving transplant nationwide.
- Nearly 4,000 people are waiting for transplants in New Jersey alone.
- 17 people die every day waiting for organ transplants.
- Registering as a donor is legal consent for organ and tissue donation after death and cannot be revoked by anyone but you.

## ONE organ donor can save 8 lives.



**Darius**  
Kidney Recipient



**Mike**  
Kidney/Pancreas  
Recipient



**Missy**  
Liver Recipient



**Denise**  
Double-lung  
Recipient



**Darryl**  
Double-lung  
Recipient



**Emma**  
Heart Recipient



**Dawn**  
Lung Recipient



**Chris**  
Kidney and Pancreas  
Recipient

## ONE tissue donor can enhance the lives of over 75 people.

*Michelle received an ACL transplant from a tissue donor, which allows her to support her family and her community.*



*Pam Drozd's husband, Mike, has enhanced 57 lives to date through tissue donation.*

# Frequently Asked Questions About Donation

## Will my decision to be a donor impact my medical care in any way?

No. The decision to be an organ donor will in no way affect the level of medical care for a sick or injured person. The team of doctors and nurses involved in treating the patient is not involved with the recovery/transplant team, which is called only after death has occurred.

## What determines who receives an organ?

Organs are computer matched according to compatibility of donor and recipient tissue, determined by various tests, waiting time, and the medical need of the recipient. Social or financial data are not part of the computer database and therefore, are not factors in the determination of who receives an organ.

## Are there additional costs to be an organ and/or tissue donor?

There is never a charge to the family or estate of the donor for organ and tissue recovery. All associated recovery costs are paid by NJ Sharing Network. Donation is an altruistic gift and by law, NJ Sharing Network is not able to pay for any other funeral or hospital charges unrelated to the donation process.

## Are there age limits on donation?

There is no definitive age limit for organ donation. NJ Sharing Network has successfully procured organs from donors as young as a few days to adults in their 90s. A patient's medical history is more important than the age of the donor. If a patient has a normal functioning organ and is in good health, then organ donation can be an option.

## Will the donation impact traditional funeral services?

The cause and circumstances of death could have an impact on timing and funeral arrangements. It is important to work with an experienced funeral director. During the recovery procedure, the utmost care and respect is taken with the donor's body, and every effort is made to meet your needs. Donated organs and tissue are removed by skilled medical professionals in a sterile surgical procedure.



"My son always saw the good in the world. Now, because of his corneas, someone else is able to see the beautiful world through his eyes."

—Sangeeta Badlani  
Mother of Tissue Donor, Nikhil



Brian Glennon started the longest living donor chain at one hospital, impacting over 30 lives.



"Realizing my son could help someone else one last time gave our life meaning again."

— Iris and Ezequiel Garcia  
Parents of organ and tissue donor, Reinaldo



Brianna Edler-Strand is forever grateful that she was able to donate her kidney to her former choir director, Marcus.

# What You Can Do Today to Save a Life

An informed clergy can assist parishioners with facts and options about the blessings and life-saving gift of organ and tissue donation. Below are some activities that can be implemented immediately.

## **Share the message with your congregation:**

- Address your support of donation as the ultimate gift of life during your sermon (sample sermons, scriptures, and other resources available in this guide).
- Contact NJ Sharing Network to have a volunteer /staff member touched by donation speak briefly at one of your services.
- Place a donation focused message on your outdoor bulletin board.

## **Recognize organ & tissue donor families and transplant recipients in your congregation:**

- Remember organ and tissue donors with candlelight vigils or other remembrance ceremonies.
- Ask for those who have been affected by organ and tissue donation to please stand during a sermon. Ask for a moment of silence to honor those who gave, on behalf of those who received, and with hope for those who continue to wait.

## **Host an organ and tissue donor registry table:**

- This table can be set up during services as well as community events, enabling your congregation to make an educated and informed decision. NJ Sharing Network volunteers are available to distribute materials and assist with donor registration.

## **Website and social media:**

- Link NJ Sharing Network's website to your house of worship's website.
- Share your support of donation and National Donor Sabbath on your house of worship's Facebook page and Instagram page.
- Encourage your congregation to visit [www.SaveNJLives.com](http://www.SaveNJLives.com) to see how many residents of their community are currently waiting for a life-saving transplant.

## **Education:**

- Include education about organ and tissue donation as an objective for your health ministry.
- Place brochures about NJ Sharing Network and its life-saving mission around your house of worship.
- Share stories and pictures of those touched by organ and tissue donation as well as educational information in bulletins and newsletters (sample wording available in this resource guide).

# Various Religious Views on Organ Donation



**“I stand in full support of promoting donation. There have been persons I have known who have received and died waiting to receive the gift of life. I encourage all New Jersey National Baptists to get involved and save a life.”**

*Dr. Guy Campbell Jr., Pastor*

## **AME & AME Zion**

Donation is viewed as an act of neighborly love and charity by these denominations. They encourage all members to support donation as a way of helping others.

## **Amish**

Approved if there is a definite indication that the health of the recipient would improve, but reluctant if the outcome is questionable.

## **Assembly of God**

Donation is highly supported.

## **Bahai**

The Bahai faith believes that transplants are acceptable if prescribed by medical authorities, and are permitted to donate their bodies for research and for restorative purposes.

## **Baptist**

Baptist groups have supported organ and tissue donation as an act of charity and leave the decision to donate up to the individual.

## **Buddhism**

Buddhists believe organ and tissue donation is a matter that should be left to an individual's conscience. Reverend Gyomay Masao Kubose, president and founder of The Buddhist Temple of Chicago said, "We honor those people who donate their bodies and organs to the advancement of medical science and to saving lives." The importance of letting loved ones know your wishes is stressed.

## **Christianity**

Christians consider organ donation an act of love and a way of following Jesus' example.

## **Christian Scientist**

The question of donation is left to the individual church member.

## **Episcopal**

In 1982, a resolution was passed that recognizes the life-giving benefits of blood, organ and tissue donation. All Episcopalians are encouraged to become donors.

## **Greek Orthodox**

Donation is supported as a way to better human life through transplantation or research.

## **Hinduism**

There are no references to organ and tissue donation in Hindu scriptures. Hindu beliefs and principles support organ and tissue donation. The philosophy of Yajna, which promotes giving to others, is one of the highest principles of the Vedas. A true act of Yajna would be giving someone the gift of life by donating organs and tissues. Additionally, the Hindu philosophy of karma and helping others supports the notion of organ donation.

## **Independent Conservative Evangelical**

Each Church is autonomous and leaves the decision to donate up to the individual.

## Islam

“Whosoever saves the life of one person it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind.”

—Holy Qur’an, chapter 5:32

Normally, violating the human body, whether living or dead, is forbidden in Islam – but the Shariah (Muslim law) believes this can be overruled when saving another person’s life. The religion of Islam strongly believes in the principle of saving human lives. According to A. Sachedina in his Transplantation Proceedings article, Islamic Views on Organ Transplantation, “The majority of Muslim scholars, belonging to various schools of Islamic law, have invoked the principle of priority of saving human life and have permitted organ transplantation as a necessity to procure that noble end.”

The Shariah Council of the UK ruled in 1995 that they supported organ transplantation as a means of alleviating pain or saving life on the basis of the rules of the Shariah. They also ruled that Muslims can carry organ donor cards and that in the event that no organ donor card is found on the person of the deceased, the next of kin can give consent for donation.

## Jehovah’s Witness

Donation is a matter of individual decision. Jehovah’s Witnesses do allow for transplantation after blood has been drained from the organ. Worldwide, there are currently more than 90,000 doctors who have made it known that they are willing to treat Jehovah’s Witnesses without blood.

## Judaism

All four branches of Judaism support and encourage donation.

“The greatest mitzvah, the greatest good you can do, is to save someone else’s life...If one is in the position to donate an organ to save another’s life, it’s obligatory to do so, even if the donor never knows who the beneficiary will be. The basic principle of Jewish ethics, ‘the infinite worth of the human being,’ includes donation.”

—Rabbi Moses Tendler, Chairman of the Bioethics Commission of the Rabbinical Council of America

Pikuach Nefesh, the commandment to save a life, overrides most other commandments. So even if there is a priority to be buried whole, saving a life by organ donation is more important.

—Halachic Organ Donor Society (HODS) [www.hods.org](http://www.hods.org)

## Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

There is no church law or theological reason preventing Lutheran Christians from choosing to be organ donors, and God’s promise to resurrect the dead is not compromised by organ donation.

## Mennonite

Mennonites believe the decision to donate is up to the individual and/or their family.

## Mormonism

In 2007 the Church of Latter Day Saints issued a statement on donation, which read in part: “The donation of organs and tissue is a selfless act that often results in great benefit to individuals with medical conditions.”

## Pentecostalism

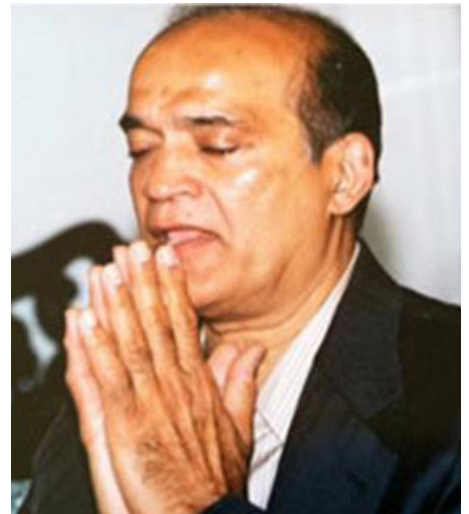
Pentecostals believe that the decision to donate should be left up to the individual.

## Presbyterianism

Presbyterians encourage and support donation.

## Quakersism

Organ and tissue donation is believed to be an individual decision.



*Sham Karnarni gave the gift of sight through tissue donation. A devoted father and husband, he was a dedicated spiritual follower of Hinduism and believed organ and tissue donation was the greatest gift one could give. His family is comforted knowing that his wishes could be fulfilled.*

### **Roman Catholic Church**

Donation is viewed as an act of charity and love. Transplants are morally and ethically acceptable to the Vatican.

Pope Francis described the act of organ donation as 'a testimony of love for our neighbour' when he met with the Transplantation Committee for the Council of Europe (CD-P-TO) who gathered in Rome.

### **Sikhism**

The Sikh religion stresses the importance of performing noble deeds, and saving a life is considered one of the greatest forms of noble deeds. Therefore organ donation is deemed acceptable to the Sikh religion.

### **Seventh Day Adventist**

Donation and transplantation are strongly encouraged.

### **Unitarian Universalist**

Donation is widely supported and viewed as an act of love and giving.

### **United Methodist**

A 1984 policy statement notes that the church "recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation, and thereby encourages all Christians to become organ and tissue donors."

## **Scripture Principles Supporting Donation**

The timeless content of the scriptures speaks to donation in principle. The following scriptures are selected because of their message of giving, healing, and understanding of the relationship between human beings. They can be used as calls to worship, responsive readings, and affirmations of faith. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but is a starting point for worship resources and possible sermon ideas.

### **HEBREW BIBLE**

**Genesis 2:20-30** The first transplant: A rib taken from Adam to create Eve.

**Ezekiel 37** The Valley of Dry Bones, "These bones shall live."

**Leviticus 1:7** "Thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself."

**Isaiah 35:1-6** "Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees...the eyes of the blind shall be opened..."

**Deuteronomy 30:15-20** "Choose life so that you and your descendents may live."

### **NEW TESTAMENT**

**Matthew 5:7** "Blessed are the merciful."

**Matthew 7:12** "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them."

**Matthew 10:8** "Heal the sick...freely ye have received, freely give."

**Matthew 25: 31-46** "Caring for the stranger."

**Mark 9:47** We can enter heaven without having every part of our bodies present.

**Luke 6:37-38** "Give and it shall be given unto you."

**John 3:16-17** "God so loved the world that he gave..."

**John 10:10** "Give life that others may live more abundantly."

**I John 4:11** "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

**II Corinthians 9:6-8** "Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

**Revelation 21:4-5** "In eternity we will not need our earthly bodies. Former things will pass away, all things will be made new."

### PRAYER

Here is a sample prayer which can be incorporated into a service. It can also be included as a written prayer in a weekly bulletin.

*O God, we thank Thee for the gift of life. May we always cherish this gift and protect it in the cradle of responsibility. May we understand that our bodies are the houses of Thy infinite spirit. The mortal house is a temporary abode, but within is the brilliant light of eternity. Every chamber is a repository of vitality. Each is a place of life. Together, they form a Temple of God. Amen.*

### BENEDICTION

What follows is a sample Benediction a clergy member may like to include at the end of a service or Donor Sabbath Program.

*As we go from this House of Worship, may we take with us the words and the spirit that our faith offers us. Here, we learn of and sing praises for the gift of life. We declare that while we live our bodily form is the vessel that receives God's light. May we be worthy bearers of that light in bodies which are strong and healthy.*

*From our eyes, may the light shine brightly so that in the darkness we may see the needs of others. Through our ears, may we hear beyond the noise of self-interest to the calls for help from those in need. May our hearts beat with compassion and our arms be strong in reaching out to lift up those who stumble.*

*And after life has gone from us, may we still remain the messengers of Thy Light. May the sparks house within us, because of our offering of love, become the flame of light for others. — Amen.*

## Sermon Ideas

Clergy have their own unique way of sermon preparation and delivery. With that understanding and appreciation, the following suggestions are given as ideas to consider when developing a communication to the congregation.

### NON-DENOMINATION SERMON

#### **For Organ Donation** By Alden Solovy

*God of health and healing,  
We give thanks for the medical science  
That allows us to remove organs from one person  
And implant them into another,  
Renewing life for the critically ill.  
Bless all those who dedicate their lives to this sacred task.  
Grant strength and fortitude to the scientists and  
researchers,  
Surgeons, nurses and clinicians,  
Administrators and other professionals  
Whose efforts give life.  
May the work of their hands never falter.  
Shine Your light on those who,*

*Still living, give so freely of themselves.  
Grant them health, prosperity and long life.  
Remember those who have given of themselves in death,  
Providing vital organs to those on the edge of life.  
May this final act of charity and love  
Be a testimony to their lives.  
Grant their families comfort, consolation and peace.  
Blessed are You, God of miracles,  
Who heals, blesses and sustains life.*

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### **Genesis 2:26-31** – *Responsible power*

In the moment of our creation we were given power over all things. Responsible use of this power would include using our own bodies to give life.

**John 11:25** – *“I am the resurrection and the life.”*

### **Matthew 10:1-8** — *“The Imperative to Heal”*

“Heal the sick...freely ye have received, freely give.”

Death need not be the final declaration of our lives. We can choose to donate vital organs to enable as many as eight people to live and tissue to help more than 75 others. The decision to donate organs at the end of one’s life is the beginning of healing for many others.

### **I Corinthians 15:35-58** – *The spiritual body*

These texts could be used to preach about the resurrection, emphasizing that in the resurrection the physical body is transformed into a spiritual body. Therefore, the gift of organs and tissues does not affect the ability of one to be resurrected.

### **Luke 6:31-38** — *Give to others and God will give to you*

This text could be explored as to the command to give to others and various ways that we can give, including the giving of our bodies.

### **Romans 8:28-29** — *Seeking the good*

This text could be used to show how, in the midst of tragic circumstances of sudden death, God is seeking with us to find good. Donation may be one sign of good in what may be perceived as a senseless death.

### **Luke 10:27** — *Donation: The Act of Love*

The greatest commandment is to love others as we love ourselves. Although we are willing to accept organ transplants to save our own lives, we are often unwilling to donate organs to save the lives of others. Our Lord demonstrated with His own life how even in sorrow, love enables us to embrace the needs of others. Self-seeking is self-destructive, but to empty ourselves in loving service shall make us a lasting blessing to the world.

### **John 3:16-17** — *God gave his Son*

God gave his Son to us so that we might live in eternal life. Can we not give of our organs and tissues when we no longer have need of them so that others may live in this temporary world?

### **Luke 14:12-14** — *Giving without reward*

In this text we are told to give to those who are in need without thought of reward from them. The need for organ and tissue donation is great and the gift can mean life for others.

### **Islam**

“Whosoever saves the life of one person it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind.”

—Holy Qur’an, chapter 5:32

### **Hinduism**

“...it is said that the soul is invisible...knowing this you should not grieve for the body.”

—Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:25

“Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile.”

—The Manusmriti



*When Len Cicero, a congregant of the United Church of Christ was in need of a kidney, he spoke about the importance of organ and tissue donation.*

*Senior Minister Mark Boyea and his wife Cindy were among the many who volunteered to be tested as suitable donors. Cindy donated her kidney to Len, giving him a second chance at life.*

*Says Cindy: “My faith made this an easy decision. Think about what your faith really means—you can’t give and not take. Even in your passing, you can help someone else to live a better life.”*

"The important issue for a Hindu is that which sustains life should be accepted and promoted as Dharma (righteous living). Organ donation is an integral part of our living."

—Hasmukh Velji Shah, International Trustee, World Council of Hindus

"Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the lives of others."

— Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

## Suggested Language for Bulletins and/or Newsletters

The samples below may be inserted into weekly bulletins or newsletters for distributing to the congregation:

To think of others in our hours of grief and sorrow is truly compassionate and selfless. Please consider the gift of life – organ and tissue donation. (Organization name) supports this gift in the spirit of love and generosity. Discuss organ donation after worship with your family and friends. Help others have a chance to live a full life by saying "Yes" to donation on your license or ID or online anytime at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

(*Organization Name*) supports and encourages organ and tissue donation as the ultimate gift of one person to another. Take a moment to discuss organ and tissue donation with your family and friends and join the donor registry. For more information, visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

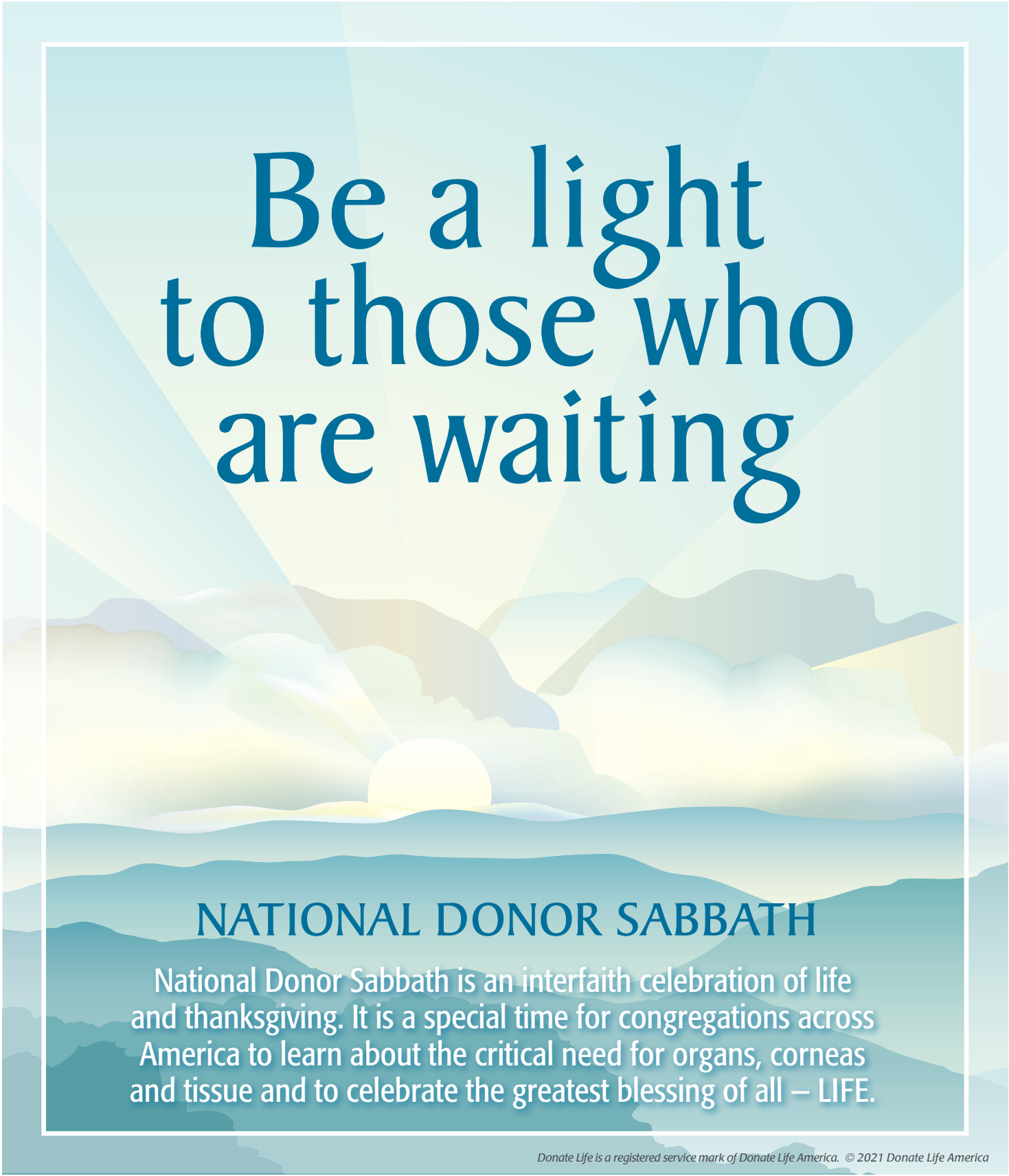
To think of others in our hours of grief and sorrow is truly compassionate and selfless. Please consider the gift of life — organ and tissue donation. Our church supports this gift in the spirit of love and generosity. Remember to discuss your decision about organ donation with your family and join the National Donate Life Registry. For more information visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

Over 100,000 people nationwide currently wait for a life-saving organ transplant and hundreds of thousands are in need of life-enhancing tissue transplants. For many, the chance to live a full life won't come unless all of us consider organ and tissue donation. Discuss organ donation after worship with your family and friends. Help others have a chance to live a full life by joining the National Donate Life Registry. For more information, visit [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

Our congregation supports and encourages organ and tissue donation as the ultimate gift of one person to another. November is National Donor Sabbath. Take a moment to discuss donation with your family and friends. Please consider making this great gift in God's name and register online at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

How do we respond to the blessings that God has bestowed on us? How do we deal responsibly with the gifts God has given us? To think only of ourselves is to squander our lives. But to respond gratefully means we praise God with our lips and our actions. To respond gratefully is to realize that all of life is God's, and we are called to care for it and share it. With these thoughts, we ask you to consider giving so others may live. Give the gift of life – organ and tissue donation. Register today at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

Places of worship throughout New Jersey will celebrate National Donor Sabbath this November to raise awareness about the critical need for organ and tissue donors. Over 100,000 men, women and children are waiting for a life-saving transplant. In New Jersey alone, nearly 4,000 people await life-saving organs and thousands more wait for tissue transplants that can dramatically improve their quality of life. Today, 17 people will die because they will not get the organ transplant they so desperately need. We encourage members of the (*Organization Name*) family to consider organ and tissue donation. Discuss your wishes with your family and friends. You can register as an organ donor online at [www.NJSharingNetwork.org](http://www.NJSharingNetwork.org).

A stylized, layered landscape illustration. In the foreground, there are rolling hills in shades of blue and green. Above them, a bright yellow sun is rising, partially obscured by soft, white and yellow clouds. In the background, there are more mountain ranges in muted blue and grey tones. The overall color palette is soft and natural, with a light blue sky at the top.

# Be a light to those who are waiting

## NATIONAL DONOR SABBATH

National Donor Sabbath is an interfaith celebration of life and thanksgiving. It is a special time for congregations across America to learn about the critical need for organs, corneas and tissue and to celebrate the greatest blessing of all – LIFE.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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To learn more,  
get involved and register  
as an organ and tissue donor, visit  
[NJSharingNetwork.org](http://NJSharingNetwork.org)



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A Donate Life Organization