



MIDWEST
TRANSPLANT
Give Hope. Share Life.

Community and Faith Leaders' Donation Resource Guide

This resource guide is a collection of materials intended to help inform and build awareness of organ, eye and tissue donation among community faith leaders.

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What Faith Leaders Can Do

- Incorporate the subject of organ, eye and tissue donation into worship services.
- Organize a sermon, reading, or testimonial by a transplant recipient, donor family or living donor.
- Frequently include articles about organ, eye and tissue donation in the church bulletin.
- Encourage your community to pray for people awaiting transplant and those who have given the gift of life. Request a minute of silence during services.
- Ask a member of your spiritual community who has been affected by donation to write a personal story for your bulletin or religious press.
- Use religious text with references to the value of life, the renewal of life and the value of continuing life.
- Include education and promotion of organ, eye and tissue donation as an objective for the faith community's health ministry team.
- Write an article in your congregational bulletin or religious press about the benefits of organ eye and tissue donation.
- Provide an organ, eye and tissue donation educational presentation for parishioners.
- Host a donor drive to encourage individuals to join the organ, eye and tissue donor registry.
- Recognize families of organ, eye, and tissue donors and remember them with candlelight vigils or other remembrances, such as "blossoms of hope" daffodil or tree seedling plantings.

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- Celebrate with transplant recipients.
 - Support and counsel families, when a loved one dies, regarding organ, eye and tissue donation.
 - Provide informational brochures for parishioners.
 - Provide materials in Spanish or other languages frequently used by parishioners.
 - Lead prayer to remember families who suffered loss through death, yet offered life through organ, eye and tissue donation. Include the thousands of people who continue to wait for desperately needed organs, eyes and tissues to save or improve their lives.
 - Work with community groups, religious organizations, and families to promote public awareness of donation and transplantation.
 - Lead by example: Let your congregation know that you have joined the donor registry and discussed the decision with your family.
 - Contact Midwest Transplant Network for a speaking engagement fulfilled by one of its volunteer Ambassadors.
 - **FACT: Nearly all religious groups support organ, eye and tissue donation and transplantation as long as it does not impede the life or hasten the death of the donor.**

Faith Leader's Role When a Loved One Dies

Adapted from the Clergy's Role in Donation by Charles H. Chandler, DMin

The faith leaders are part of the health team: Surgeons, primary physicians, nurses, medical technicians, procurement coordinators and clergy all have specific roles to play in relationship to organ, eye and tissue donation when a loved one dies. Faith leaders are an essential member of the team for various reasons. Why?

- **They have a role as a spiritual leader:** The faith leader can clarify theological and ethical questions that the family may have. They can also provide comfort to the family by affirming their decision. The faith leader's presence represents the presence of God. This, in itself, provides comfort.
- **They have a relationship to the family:** The congregational faith leader knows the family and usually will have earned their trust. They often look to him or her for guidance in making decisions at this stage, being too frightened or too overwhelmed to stand alone. The faith leader's responsibility is to the family. He or she becomes their advocate. Since the faith leader is often already with the family, he or she can restate and interpret what was said by the medical staff. The faith leader is the member of the team with the most training in relating to the family.
- **They have an ability to create awareness:** The faith leader can address subjects such as organ, eye and tissue donation in sermons, lectures and in pastoral counseling. This helps prepare families in advance. Faith leaders can be attitudinal change agents. The faith leader may know the donor's wishes because of previous discussions with him or her. Sharing that information can lighten the burden of the family's decision.
- **They have a relationship to the medical staff:** By working together, the entire team can develop trust and a spirit of cooperation, with all members learning their roles and carrying them out to the best of their abilities.

Sermons, Prayers and Biblical Perspectives — Christian Bible

The following scriptures provide messages of giving, healing and understanding 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.

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.

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 an average of 100 others. The decision to donate organs at the end of one’s life is the beginning of healing for many others.

Mark 14:3-9 — The sweet fragrance of sacrificial giving

A self-indulgent Judas Iscariot criticizes the generosity of a woman for breaking open an expensive alabaster vase and using its contents, a priceless perfumed oil, to anoint Jesus. Her sacrificial giving is praised by the Lord and her deed declared a memorial. Through donation, we unselfishly pour out the fragrant gift of life upon those awaiting a second chance at life through transplantation.

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.

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. The Lord demonstrated with His own life how even in sorrow, love enables us to embrace others’ needs. Self-seeking is self-

destructive, but to empty ourselves in loving service shall make us a lasting blessing to the 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, tissue and eye donation is great.

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, eyes and tissues when we no longer have need of them so that others may live in this temporary world?

John 8:32 — **The liberating truth**

“...And the truth shall make you free.” Most refusals to donate are influenced by misconceptions, myths and mistrust of the medical community. Consequently, people are perishing due to the lack of knowledge. If we would seek the truth about organ donation, we might embrace the gift of life. The truth will liberate us not only to accept it, but also to give it.

John 11:25 - **I am the resurrection and the life**

I Corinthians 15:35-38 — **The spiritual body**

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

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 seeks with us to find good. Donation may be one sign of good in an otherwise sudden or senseless death.

Sermons, Prayers and Biblical Perspectives — Hebrew Bible

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| Genesis 2:20-30 | Bone transplant: a rib taken from Adam to give life to Eve |
| Leviticus 1:7 | “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” |
| Deuteronomy 30:15-20 | “Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.” |
| Psalms 41 | Images of a healing Lord |
| Psalms 107 | “Consider the steadfast love of the Lord.” |
| Psalms 111 | “I give thanks to the Lord.” |
| Psalms 116 | “O Lord, I pray, save my life!” |
| Psalms 145 | “The Lord is gracious and merciful.” |
| Psalms 147 | “Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving.” |
| Ecclesiastes 3:1-17 | “For everything there is a season...” |
| Isaiah 35:1-6 | “Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees...the eyes of the blind shall be opened...” |
| Ezekiel 37 | The Valley of Dry Bones: “These bones shall live.” |

Sermons, Prayers and Biblical Perspectives — New Testament

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| Matthew 5:7 | “Blessed are the merciful.” |
| Matthew 7:7 | “Ask ... seek ... knock.” |
| Matthew 7:12 | “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you...” |
| 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 4:16-21 | “...recovery of sight to the blind.” |
| Luke 6:37-38 | “Give and it will be given to you.” |
| John 3:16-17 | “God so loved the world that He gave...” |
| John 10:10 | “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” |
| John 15:12-17 | “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” |
| 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.” |
| 1 John 4:11 | “Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.” |
| Revelation 21:4-5 | In eternity we will not need our earthly bodies: “Former things will pass away; all things will be made new.” |

Sermons, Prayers and Biblical Perspectives — Zen Buddhist and Islamic

Zen Buddhist Sacred Texts

Zen Buddhists – The “Jataka Tales” are ancient stories/myths/accounts in which selflessness and generosity are the hallmarks. There may also be suitable references in the “Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha.”

Islamic Perspectives

There are no specific texts in the Qur'an or the books of hadith, the Prophet's sayings, that speak directly to this point or could be interpreted in such a manner as to be taken as an overall permission for a recent medical development such as donation/transplantation. 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." There is the statement that “whoever saves a life, it is as if he had saved all humankind.” This being the case, it then becomes a matter concerning which current qualified scholars must give a ruling, and there is general agreement that organ/tissue donation is permissible.

Sample Sermons

This section contains sample sermons to assist faith leaders in preparation for donor events and memorial ceremonies.

Sermon Outline (Protestant)

John 3:16

- I. The theme throughout the Bible is God giving of His life.
- II. The principle theme of the New Testament is Jesus giving of His life so we can live.
 - A. Jesus gave His life.
 1. No greater love demonstrated than this
 2. No greater reward than giving so others can live
 - B. Jesus gave His body that we may be whole.
 - C. Jesus gave His blood, so we need not struggle for our own cleansing.

Luke 10:25-37

- III. It is understood that we love ourselves enough to know we are worthy to give of ourselves.
 - A. The command is to love one another as ourselves.
 - B. We would certainly want others to give of their material possessions, talents and time to improve our life.
 - C. We should do unto others as we would have them do unto us.
- IV. Many are uncomfortable about what others think if we were to give to those in need.
 - A. But the Samaritan who had every cultural reason in the world not to help, did help.
 - B. Could we not/should we not be available to give to those in need of lifesaving procedures and gifts such as organs, tissues and blood?
 - C. We do feel uncomfortable about giving, but reality points out we shouldn't be.
 1. Many people throughout history have cremated their bodies, as they saw no more need for the body.
 2. We need to remember, as the Moravians did, that death is the great equalizer.
 - a) We may be rich or poor materially, but at death we are all equal because we don't take it with us.
 - b) We should give that which will only be left behind to decay.
 - D. We should always be reminded that we go to God with only a rich or poor soul.

In Acts 3:1-10, Peter comes across a man crippled since birth, sitting at the gate called “Beautiful”. Peter wasn't bothered by the man's plea for alms. Instead, Peter associated with this man (supposedly unclean because of impairment). Peter didn't have gold or silver, but instead he gave the man something more precious — a new life through new legs. This nearly cost Peter his life (Acts 5), but Peter courageously gave the man the power to be whole so he could walk through the gate called “Beautiful.”

The gift of giving life is an eternal heritage left behind by the donor. Jesus, Peter and many others are known for their life-giving gifts. Today, places such as Lynchburg General Hospital in Lynchburg, Virginia, have planted trees in remembrance of their organ donors.

Sample Sermon (Baptist)

"Organ Donation: a Biblical Perspective"

An Act of Redemption

This world has not turned out as God intended. God, the creator, suffers at the condition of His handiwork. The world as we see it today hardly resembles the perfect creation that God spoke into existence. Crime, hunger, death and disease were not present at creation, but due to man's fall in the garden, adversity has found a home in every human soul.

God, the creator, invites all those who would be His to suffer with Him. We are compelled to bear our burdens with the purifying hope that suffering will not have the last word. Even the timidest Christian must stand on the promise that ultimate and unconditional triumph awaits those who love the Lord. Our faith must fasten on the fact that no matter how severe the suffering, God will redeem the situation and use it for our good.

Since suffering is inevitable for both God and man, God has created a redeeming value for suffering. The goodness of God will allow something positive to come out of a negative situation. God's greatest demonstration of this redemptive process is realized in His son. The death of Jesus Christ resulted in the redemption of the world. His finished work at Calvary, restored the broken fellowship between God and His most precious creation, man. God rescued creation and mankind from hopelessness

with His redeeming love. Christ suffered the loss of His life, but it became the seed of the world's hope and joy.

Sooner or later, suffering and sorrow comes to every home. No conditions of wealth, culture or even religion can prevent it. But the losses and griefs of life are intended to leave behind an abundance of character and blessings that will make eternity richer. In a Christian home, sorrow should always leave a benediction. It should be received as God's messenger, and when it is, it will always leave a blessing.

Some treasures must be mined. They have to be discovered, realized. Blessings are often shrouded behind the veil of overwhelming grief. There are some tough places in this world, but nothing compares to the intensive care waiting room, where high levels of emotion and active grief can barricade any offer of redemption. Unfortunately, the only time donation advocates can approach a family about organ and tissue donation is in the midst of their grief and sorrow. Many people can only see grief as an enemy to whom they will refuse to be reconciled. They feel that they can never be comforted. For many families who consent to organ, eye and tissue donation, it is a way of redeeming the loss of a loved one. In a situation where they feel victimized, the decision to donate gives the family a feeling of being in control. It gives life to others. Organ, eye and tissue donation have helped families deal with their grief by bringing something positive out of a seemingly negative situation.

Not everyone dies in a way that allows for vital organ donation. In fact, only a small percentage of people who die can be organ donors. If the decision to consent for organ donation ever becomes ours, we should consider why God has allowed such an opportunity.

The sweetest songs that have ever been sung have come out of fire. Sorrows should not be wasted. We should yield our rebellion, accept our suffering and discover if it has some mission to perform, some gift to give, some golden fruit to enjoy, some redeeming value.

A Sweet Fragrance in the House

In Mark, chapter 14, we have the marvelous account of a woman breaking an expensive alabaster vase filled with spikenard, a priceless perfumed oil, and anointing Jesus with all of it. Her extravagance was criticized by Judas Iscariot and others in the house. But our Lord praised the sacrificial giving of this woman and declared her deed

a memorial. Suppose she had left the expensive oil in the unbroken vase. Would there have been any mention of it? Would her deed of careful keeping and self-preservation been told all over the world? She broke the vase, poured its contents forth, lost it, sacrificed it, and now perfumed incense has drifted into every home where this message has been heard. We may keep our life if we will, carefully preserving it from waste, but we shall have no reward. However, if we empty it out in loving service, we shall make it a lasting blessing to the world, and it shall be well spoken of forever.

By donating organs, we unselfishly pour out the fragrant gift of life upon those awaiting a second chance at life through transplantation. The sweet fragrance of sacrificial giving will flow into the homes of transplant recipients whose lives were saved and/or improved through the gift of life.

The donation of organs should not only be regarded as a medical or a secular good deed but also as a religious, sacramental extension of Christ's own life-giving sacrifice. Organ sharing is consistent with the beliefs of most major religions and is viewed as an act of charity, fraternal love and self-sacrifice.

The cross of Christ is not only substitutionary, but it is also representative. His life of humility and unselfishness should become a prototype for those who bear His name as Christians. We should follow His example by giving the gift of life so that others may live life more abundantly.

The Liberating Truth

Unfamiliarity with the truth concerning the donor process will hinder the decision to choose life in the face of death. Misconceptions, myths and mistrust of the medical community will eclipse our perspectives and leave us fearful and ignorant of the facts. God tells us that His people perish because of the lack of knowledge. People are indeed perishing, particularly African Americans. African Americans are less likely to consent to organ donation than white people, but much more likely to develop kidney failure. Another truth is that African Americans have an unidentified biological susceptibility to hypertension and diabetes, the major causes of kidney failure. If more African Americans would donate their organs, eyes, and tissues it would provide better matches and increased chances of survival for other African Americans.

The misconception, "I need all my organs intact in order to get into heaven," is not scriptural. The Apostle Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:50 that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." In eternity, we will not have or need our earthly bodies. Old things will pass away, and all things will be made new.

There is also an element of mistrust in the medical community. The myths that you could be declared dead prematurely just to gain organs, or that you won't receive top medical care if you have signed a donor card, are flights from reality. The fact is that no one becomes a donor until all lifesaving measures have been exhausted. An open casket funeral is possible with any type of donation. There is no cost to the family for organ, eye and tissue donation. If we would seek the truth about organ donation, the truth will liberate us not only to accept but also to give the gift of life. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

Through Christ's spirit, we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jew or Gentile. In sharing one body, we cannot isolate ourselves from the hurts of humanity. We are called upon to "bear ye one another's burdens." While we can't save the world, we can say "yes" when asked to join the organ, eye and tissue donor registry. To become a vital organ donor is to give life to as many as eight recipients. A tissue donor can help as many as 100 people.

Should you decide to give the gift of life, discuss it with your family; let them know your wishes. Death, especially our own, is not something that we love to talk about, but in the last 2,000 years, no one has been able to escape it.

Death need not be the final comment of our lives. Instead of one stone marker at the head of our grave, there could be living memorials: real people with real families whose lives have been put back together through the gift of life. This is Christianity at its best: sharing one's own life for the purpose of helping someone else.

God, the creator of this world, has placed us as stewards of His creation. Being stewards, we cannot ignore the imperative to heal found in Matthew 10:8, "Heal the sick ...freely ye have received, freely give."

Give the gift of life; it's the chance of a lifetime.

By the Rev. Irvin Lance Peebles

Sample Sermon (Jewish)

"Don't Hang Up the Phone. It's Your Covenant Calling."

It was a little over a month ago. I remember the phone call quite well. I was settling into a comfortable position at my desk, reflecting on the holidays, thinking about what message I would offer this Rosh Hashanah. What fault would I force others to confront? What issue would I use to make the congregation squirm in their seats? And then the phone rang. On the other line was a member of our congregation who works with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as director of the Division of Organ Transplantation. Why was she calling me?

The voice on the other end said to me, "I want to talk to you about a professional issue." Immediately I thought to myself, "Uh oh, what did I do now?" "No, no," she assured me. I wasn't in trouble. She was calling because she wanted me to give a sermon on organ donation. Had I thought at all about organ donation? And I must confess to you that only one thought went through my mind at that moment — hang up the phone. Suddenly, I didn't want to be talking about this subject at this time.

This member told me about the thousands of people across America who are waiting for transplants. About the many, many who will die because there are an insufficient number of donors to meet the need. She shared with me that Jews were among the two groups with the lowest number of organ donors; the strictest movements in Judaism permit donations in some cases.

She explained how there are many people who die tragically who would have wished to donate their organs to save a life but couldn't because they never shared that information with their families while alive. Well, I was feeling pretty overwhelmed now and more than a bit depressed, and then to prove her point she asked me if I knew what my wife's wishes would be if she were ever in an accident. And I quickly replied that it wasn't the type of question one liked to ask his wife over dinner at the end of a long day. And then I was overcome with an even stronger desire to hang up the phone, to leave the problem alone, to make the question go away.

Explain to me how I can sit in bed and read about thousands of people dying in Rwanda and be disturbed but not really have any trouble sleeping through the night, but I can't discuss the topic of organ transplantation in the middle of the day without wanting to jump out of my skin. Somehow this is different, isn't it? This is my life, my death, and who really wants to make decisions about that anyway? If we talk about it, then we make it real.

On Rosh Hashanah morning, we read a strong and disturbing piece of liturgy, the prayer Unatenah Tokef, "Let us proclaim the sacred power of this day for it is awesome and full of dread.... You, O God, are judge and arbiter.... [O]n Rosh Hashanah it is written, on Yom Kippur it is sealed...who shall live and who shall die; who shall see ripe age and who shall not; who will die by fire and who by water; who by hunger and who by thirst, who by earthquake and who by plague."

What is this prayer that tells us that God seals our fate this day? What do we make of this list of ways to die? And yet we know that we are lucky to be here. We all know people who have died in the past year. We are aware of the random nature of our lives. And the prayer Unatenah Tokef says yes, our lives are random. We don't know who will live and who will die, so it is time to get serious. We have been given another chance. We stand here today alive, lucky to be alive, so what are we going to do about it? Hope that we get lucky another year or face up to the sacred responsibility that awaits us. This prayer reminds us that today is a day of decision, today is a day when we face the unpleasant, but real, decisions that we avoid the rest of the year.

Now you're thinking, "Rabbi, it's Rosh Hashanah. Some of us are here with our children. What are you talking about? Organ transplants? Death? You're scaring my kids. Just tell us a nice story about the round challah and let us go eat a happy holiday meal."

There is a legend about King David, that when he was a young man, he learned that he would die on a Shabbat. And what do you think his favorite ceremony was? Havdalah, the ceremony that marks the end of Shabbat. The legend tells us that David couldn't get to Havdalah quickly enough.

Isn't that a lot like us? We say to ourselves, "We made it to another year, we're alive and hopefully healthy, mazel tov, l'chayim, let's give thanks and go eat some brisket." But Rosh Hashanah is not thanksgiving, and we do not live only for ourselves. We live in covenant with the people around us — our spouses, our children or grandchildren, our parents and grandparents, or our brothers and sisters. We all have people we made covenants with, people who depend on us as we depend on them. Yes, mazel tov, congratulations to all of us; we've made it to another year, but now it's time to get serious. It's time to face up to some major decisions; it's time to honor our role in the covenants we have made with our many partners in life. These high holidays are called Yamim Noraim in Hebrew, Days of Awe. We need to use this time to successfully avoid the rest of the year.

And organ donation is a great example. Too often when asked about this issue, we hide behind the answer that we don't think Jewish law allows that. But rather than pursue and study if this is true, we hide behind a vague answer that we think is true. In reality,

there are many different opinions on this issue. But for the majority of Jews in America, there is agreement that organ transplantation is permitted to some degree when the saving of a life is involved. Pikuach nefesh — the saving of a human life — is one of the most urgent mitzvot in Judaism, and based on the statistics, you can rest assured that anything taken from you will be used to save a life. While organ donation makes us uncomfortable and forces us to think about what we want done to our bodies when we die, the truth is that it may be the closest thing we have to immortality: A part of us living on in the body of another person who has been given a miraculous second chance. And who knows, maybe one of us or our loved ones or friends will one day find themselves on the other end, surviving only because someone else had that conversation with a loved one in advance and said to him or her, "These are my wishes if something ever happens to me."

What about living wills? How many of us know someone who said in their lifetime, "If I were ever in a coma, I would want to die," only to later end up on a respirator, placing a burden on their family they desperately wanted to avoid. All because they didn't really discuss the issue properly with their family. It is amazing how you and I can worry about carpools and seat belts and other day-to-day safety details while we drive around with the future of our families in our hands. Because if, God forbid, something happens to us and our families don't know what to do, we will burden them financially and emotionally in ways that could ruin them for the rest of their lives. We warn our children about drinking and driving, and we beg them to behave cautiously. Then we proceed to drive around every day with unresolved issues that are just as dangerous to the security of their futures.

There are so many issues to be discussed, so many important decisions to be made. How have we managed to avoid them for so long? We put away money to help out those we love when we are gone; we take out life insurance policies. But how many of us have bought a cemetery plot? How many of us have confronted that terrifying reality of our own mortality and saved our own family thousands of dollars in the future? A future in which we will not be around to help out.

I recently read about a 22-year-old woman who had made clear to her family her intention to be an organ donor. It seemed unusual for a 22-year-old to have such a deep awareness of her own mortality and the foresight to deal with it. Little did she realize just how soon her own life would end. She was killed in an accident and her heart was given to a man who had been waiting 4 years for lifesaving surgery. He was running out of time, and her gift kept him alive. The man who received her heart was her father.

We have the power to help the world; we have the power to help our families, but we won't help anyone if we don't talk about the decisions, if we don't make them real. When you put down the prayer book and leave this building, talk about these issues; make them real. On your way out, there are pamphlets on organ donation. Take one; read it; discuss it with your family or friends. It will offer clear answers to any of the questions you may have. There is another book printed by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations called "A Time to Prepare." It is about living wills and funeral arrangements. It has forms and information to help you understand anything you may be unsure about when writing a living will. It will make you uncomfortable now, but it will help your family later. Call us at the temple, tell us you want one, and we will order it for you.

It's time to talk about these things. It's time to make them real. Let's face it. How many of us had moments in the last few years where we were worried about our own health? Where we had a real scare? And yet what have we done about it? If I had a car that broke down in the desert, and I didn't have AAA or any other protection, wouldn't you expect me to purchase some as soon as possible afterwards? And yet, you and I keep living our lives on borrowed time, and we're not purchasing the proper insurance, we're not making another year. It is time to face our destiny while we are healthy. I know that this is painful, and I'm not trying to tell you what the right decisions are in each of the cases I have mentioned, but I know that we have to start asking the questions; we have to start making the decisions.

When I came home from that eventful phone call with Judy Braslow, I was very excited. I was fascinated by my reaction to our conversation and thought I had the makings of a great Rosh Hashanah sermon. I explained all this to my wife, Mimi. And when I was done, she looked at me cautiously and said, "So, are you going to make some big decision now?" I quickly answered, "No, no, I have to write this sermon first. I just wanted to let you know what I was going to speak about on Rosh Hashanah."

I know that these are not the easiest things to talk about, and I do not know what my final decision will be, but I do know that the time is coming when I must ask the questions. It is a covenant I made when I agreed to marry Mimi and I intend to honor it. On this Rosh Hashanah, may we all find the strength to fulfill the covenants that we have made with our loved ones, may we find the courage to make the hard decisions that cry out for a response.

Amen.

By Rabbi Brian Zimmerman

Sample Sermon (Baptist)

"Life Before Death"

There is as much mystery about life as there is about death. In this western world of ours, we never really treat either of these realities with the respect that each of them deserves. Our acquired habits, customs, and attitudes tend to make light of life and death; attempts are too frequently made to gloss over the only two certainties we have: life and death.

It is a painful exercise to watch generation after generation simultaneously disrespect life and death until each of them smacks us back into universal reality. It is no secret that societal painkillers blunt life, making people think all things are made possible with chemicals, legal and otherwise, in order to cope. Then, too, there is the ultimate painkiller — suicide. Neither of these choices corresponds to understanding, living and respecting life. Both may appeal to some, but that is not an answer for many. It never has been, nor will it ever be.

Life's questions, its challenges, its pains, its hopes and triumphs reach beyond the immediate context of the individual, family or community. We are constantly searching for answers, though at times they are just that — answers, not solutions. Answers are not solutions, only ways to them. And in order to move toward solutions, we need life. We need life even in the middle of terrible hardship and pain. Without life, there can be no answers and clearly no solutions to life's problems and challenges.

Part of the social means of coping with life's hardships was the church's emphasis on "life after death." That the suffering "servants" need not worry about the here and now; pain is only for a season. It was said, "The heavier the burden, the brighter the crown." Of course, we know that is nonsense in its purest form. But echoes of those words are still present. For the church, it is important to live and practice the understanding of life taught by Jesus in the here and now.

In the text (John 10:10), Jesus uses a metaphor for death. A thief, thief in the night, as it were. Death is like a thief — cunning, watching for another victim, universally detested. Stealing something of value, something it will never have on its own. That is like death — approaching unaware, victims largely unprepared, unexpected in the "normal" course of things. [Death] robs just like a thief; it robs the riches of life, health and even youth because it robs life itself. No one knows this as sharply as those who are called upon to donate a loved one's organs after an unexpected death.

The "world" has caved in, life has been lost, the future denied and anguish is all-consuming. There is no easy way to approach people in this situation of human tragedy. In fact, one suspects that is a matter of case-by-case, family-by-family.

The "miracle" of transplants is one thing. Our having the vocabulary to address grieving survivors is another. We are yet to have the full language, the words to adequately convey the transplant message except on a pathway that still is not complete.

It is almost solely through confronting reality, confronting life and death with courage and sensitivity, that we can have a vocabulary that will match the progress in transplants. This science will continue to develop; it will move on. We have to see to it that our words and our actions keep it human and move with it.

Giving permission is an act that contributes to the legacy of life. It emphasizes "life before death." It is an act of love that gives back to others what death took away; it gives back life. [Organ] donors have been known to save [the lives of] as many as eight people who would have been without hope had not the transplants taken place.

Such a gift is really treating life and death with the seriousness each demands. It, in a sense, is a celebration of life itself, another act of creation. We need to give thanks in the language of God because, with each new day, we can take it as God's personal invitation to each of us on this planet Earth that we have an opportunity to try and try again until we get it right. And what is it that we need so desperately to get right? That God's will be done on Earth as it is in heaven, that we, as human beings, have been ordained to have life and have it abundantly.

By the Rev. Archie Le Mone

Sample Sermon (Methodist)

"The Best of Things in the Worst of Times"

Scriptural Text: Romans 8:28

I read about a young man from Florida University who played in the 1995 college baseball playoffs. In a crucial game, this player homered, drove in four runs and made a key defensive play in leading his squad to victory over a higher-ranked team. What made his personal triumph all the more remarkable is that it came less than 48 hours after a great personal tragedy. This young man's girlfriend had been killed when her

Ford Bronco rolled over on Florida's turnpike, tore through a guardrail and dropped 25 feet into a canal. The baseball player attended the funeral mass for his girlfriend on a Friday morning, then was the hero of the game that afternoon. He said, "This was the hardest day of my life. And probably the best game of my life."

On the cornerstone of an old church in England, these words are inscribed: "In the year 1653, when all things sacred in the kingdom were either profaned or demolished, this church was built by Sir Richard Shirley, whose singular praise it was to do the best of things in the worst of times."

As a pastor, I've been intrigued and inspired by individuals who respond to negative situations with positive action. They meet overwhelming adversity with amazing ingenuity. They look for ways to redeem even the most hopeless circumstances. On the "hardest days" they seem to have their "best games." Somehow, they summon the courage "to do the best of things in the worst of times."

I recently served for three years as a hospital chaplain in a trauma hospital in Houston, Texas I came to identify with one of the characters in the popular television series "M*A*S*H" — the young Army clerk, Corporal O'Reilly. Of course, no one in the medical unit addressed him by his formal name. He acquired the nickname "Radar" because even in a noisy, hectic military camp he had the uncanny ability to hear helicopters from a great distance flying in with wounded soldiers.

Well, I developed "radar" of my own while serving as a hospital chaplain. Our institution had an air ambulance service called "Life Flight." From any point in the hospital, I could hear the roar of the helicopter as it approached the landing pad carrying its critically ill or wounded passenger.

My "radar" was sensitive not so much to the sound of the chopper as it was to the pain and suffering the chopper would bear. Patients transported by "Life Flight" were victims of every conceivable tragedy — natural disasters, industrial explosions and fires, gunshot wounds to the head (many of them self-inflicted), gruesome automobile accidents, dangerously premature births.

When I heard the dreaded sound of the helicopter, I knew I would be paged momentarily to the trauma unit, perhaps to offer a silent prayer for the patient in the midst of frantic emergency treatment, perhaps to keep vigil with the patient's family members as they absorbed the shock of the incident and vacillated between hope and despair.

Late one night, I was asked by the trauma team to be with the mother and father of a teenage girl who was blindsided in her car by a drunk driver. She had suffered irreversible head injuries and was given little chance to survive, much less to resume a normal life. As the parents poured out their anguish to me, I wept with them — in part because I, too, had a teenage daughter and felt my own vicarious anguish. Soon, the attending physician entered the waiting room and began to speak to the parents in a halting, almost apologetic, way. He explained that they had done everything that could be done but that their daughter's injuries were too severe to overcome. She had just been pronounced brain dead. Later, the doctor added, however, that her vital organs were still functioning because she remained on a respirator. Due to this unusual combination of circumstances, it was possible for their daughter to be an organ and tissue donor. The doctor proceeded to lay out the facts about donation without applying any pressure. He then offered to address their questions and concerns and give them adequate time to reach a decision.

For the next 45 minutes, this couple, already stricken with grief, struggled to make a decision they were unprepared to make. They had never thought about organ donation, for themselves or their loved ones. Now they were asked to make a decision regarding their own beloved child in the wake of a senseless tragedy, and to make it in the crucible of crisis.

The parents were initially skeptical and suspicious. They began to raise tough, even angry questions: Was their daughter's death being hastened so that her body could be exploited for organs? No, the doctor replied emphatically. She was already dead by every clinical definition, and the decision to donate was entirely up to them. Would their daughter's body be mutilated? Would it be possible for her casket to be open at her funeral? The doctor assured them that there would be no visible signs of the surgery to remove her organs and that an open casket would indeed be possible. She would be treated with utmost dignity and respect. Even so, the mother and father recoiled at the idea that any other physical damage might be done to their daughter. "Her body has already been through so much trauma," the mother said. "I don't know if I can stand putting her through anything else." The father added, "I remember holding her as a newborn baby. I want her to go out of this world the same way she came in, with her body as intact as possible."

The girl's parents were religious people, and, not surprisingly, they also raised religious questions. Does the Bible shed any light on their dilemma? Is it possible to discern God's will in this situation? Does their own church tradition encourage or discourage organ donation? The mother and father happened to be United

Methodists like myself. I mentioned to them that our recent church pronouncements have strongly advocated organ and tissue donation as a "lifegiving act." Because the technology for transplants is a recent development, the Bible is, of course, silent about this specific issue. Christ gave us the comprehensive commandment to love one another as he has loved us, but he left it to individuals to apply the law of love in particular situations. I suggested to the couple that a decision either way could be interpreted as a loving decision.

The mother and father continued to struggle aloud about their options. Then they asked to have a few minutes to talk privately and come to a conclusion. The doctor and I left the room and conferred about our exchange with the couple. We both surmised that they would reject the option of organ donation. Their heads seemed to be saying, "Organ donation is a good and helpful thing to do." But their hearts seemed to be saying, "Enough already! Let our daughter rest in peace."

Soon, the father signaled that they were ready to talk with us again. And to our amazement, they announced that they were consenting to donate their daughter's organs and tissues! I wondered to myself what caused them to overcome their caution and fear and reach a positive verdict. It wasn't necessary to ask. The mother and father proceeded to tell us why they made this choice.

They viewed their daughter's death as a cruel, needless act. Nothing could make sense of it.

Nothing could make her death good, in and of itself. But something good could come out of it.

Their daughter's death could provide the gift of life for someone else. Moreover, they decided that donating their daughter's organs would be "life-giving" not only to a needy recipient, but also to themselves as well. As parents they would find comfort and healing in the knowledge that their daughter's death had not been a total waste, that part of her physical self would benefit someone else on the brink of death.

As a hospital chaplain, I counseled numerous families facing the option of organ donation. Many declined to donate and I never presumed to judge their decisions. Their reasons for declining were varied. However, those who consented to donate all voiced the same reason. In each instance, they saw an opportunity "to do the best of things in the worst of times." They believed that their loved one's death would not have to be useless; that their own loss would somehow be transformed into someone

else's gain; that their choice to donate would bring healing and life in the midst of death.

In his epistle to the Romans, Paul makes the audacious claim that, "In everything God works for good" (8:28). No matter how negative or hopeless our circumstances, says Paul, God can produce a positive result. God can always salvage something good out of something bad. For most of us, the acid test of this credo comes with death, especially a premature, tragic death. Can anything good possibly come from a death as unjust and untimely as the death of a teenage girl at the hands of a drunk driver? According to Paul, the potential for good is always there as long as God is present in our loss and sorrow, and God is always present!

But how is this potential realized? How, in practical terms, does God work for good even in the bleakest circumstances of life and death? Part of the answer is that God accomplishes his work through us. We are called to become God's partners in the salvage business. As God empowers us "to do the best of things in the worst of times," God's redemptive purposes are realized.

Herein lies the deepest significance of a decision to donate organs and tissues. When we are faced with the worst of times — our own [imminent] death or the death of a loved one — we can choose to work with God in working for good. We can embody Christlike self-giving in the most tangible way possible. We can make our own deaths purposeful. Best of all, we can choose life for someone else. And we can make these choices now, while we are still able to think clearly and speak for ourselves, before we are incapacitated by crisis.

Frederick Buechner once compared the God of the Bible to the old alchemists — those ancient, primitive scientists who were always trying to take an inferior, impure material and transform it into gold. The testimony of faith is that God is able to pull it off! God can take even the worst — death itself — and somehow out of it bring the best. "In everything God works for good." The wonder of it is that you and I can have a hand in this great work.

Sample Sermon (Catholic)

"Eulogy of an Owl"

Scriptural Texts

A. Resurrection passages: Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:9-20; Luke 23:35-48; John 20:1-29

B. Healing miracles of Jesus: John 5:19, 9:1-12; Luke 5:12-26, 6:6-11

Depending on the occasion for this sermon, your introduction and your lead into the opening story may vary. For example, for a funeral: "My eulogy today for (the deceased) will begin with a story, titled 'Eulogy of an Owl.'"

If used at Easter, one might start by saying, "I wonder if anyone thought about what would have been appropriate to engrave on a tombstone for Jesus. I wonder if anyone has thought about a eulogy for Him. Maybe the best eulogy we can find for Jesus is the entire New Testament, which reveals His wisdom, His generosity and sensitivity, His strengths and His accomplishments. This Easter morning, I would like to begin by reading an interesting eulogy that relates to today's celebration. It is titled "Eulogy of an Owl" and is taken from [the book] *Paul Harvey's The Rest of the Story.*"

His name was Walter Elias, a city boy by birth, the son of a building contractor.

Before Walter was five, his parents moved from Chicago to a farm near Marceline, Missouri. And it was there on the farm that Walter would have his first encounter with death.

Walter was only seven that particular lazy summer afternoon, not much different from other afternoons. Dad was tending to farm chores; Mother was in the house.

It was the perfect day for a young fellow to go exploring.

Now, just beyond a grove of graceful willows lay an apple orchard. There, Walter could make believe to his heart's content that he was lost, which he never was, or that he had captured a wild animal, which he never had. But today was different. Directly in front of him, about thirty feet away — perched in the low-drooping branch of an apple tree and apparently sound asleep — was an owl.

The boy froze. He remembered his father telling him that owls rested during the day so they could hunt by night. What a wonderful pet that funny little bird would make. If only Walter could approach it without awakening it and snatch it from the tree.

With each step, the lad winced to hear dry leaves and twigs crackle beneath his feet. The owl did not stir. Closer...closer...and, at last, young Walter was standing under the limb just within range of his quarry. Slowly he reached up with one hand and grabbed the bird by its legs. He had captured it! But the owl, waking suddenly, came alive like no other animal Walter had ever seen. In a flurry of beating wings, wild eyes and frightened cries, it struggled against the boy's grasp. Walter, stunned, held on.

Now, it's difficult to imagine how what happened next, happened. Perhaps the response was sparked by gouging talons or by fear itself. But at some point, the terrified boy, still clinging to the terrified bird, flung it to the ground and stomped it to death.

When it was over, a disbelieving Walter gazed down at the broken heap of bronze feathers and blood. And he cried. Walter ran from the orchard but later returned to bury the owl, the little pet he would never know. Each shovelful of earth from the shallow grave was moistened with tears of deep regret. And for months thereafter, the owl visited Walter's dreams.

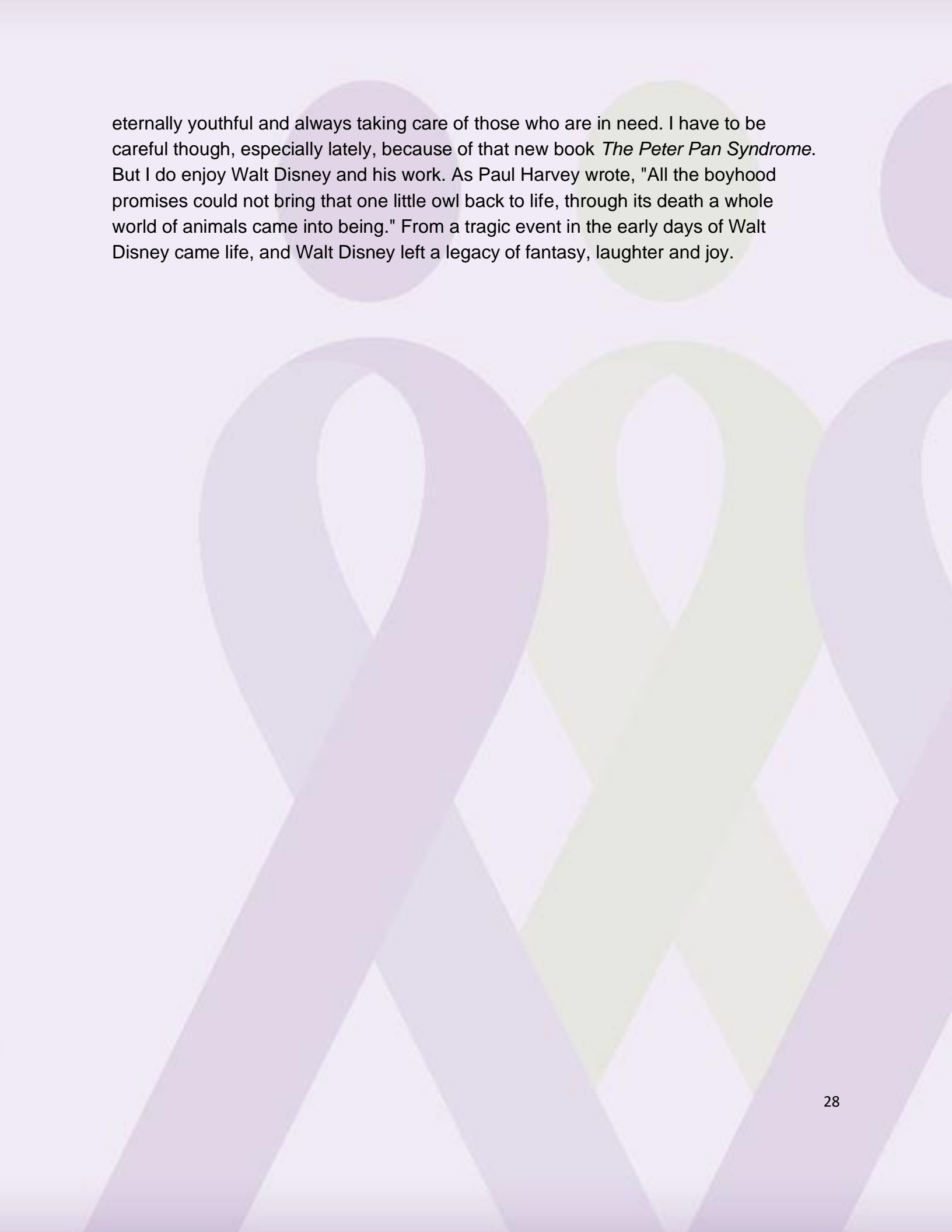
Ashamed, he would tell no one of the incident until many years later. By then, the world forgave him. For that sad and lonely summer's day, in the early spring of Walter Elias' life, brought with it an awakening of the meaning of life. Walter never, ever again killed a living creature. Although all the boyhood promises could not bring that one little owl back to life, through its death, a whole world of animals came into being.

For it was then that a grieving seven-year-old boy, attempting to atone for a thoughtless misdeed, first sought to possess the animals of the forest while allowing them to run free — by drawing them.

Now the boy, too, is gone, but his drawings live on in the incomparable, undying art of Walter Elias...Disney. Walt Disney.

And now you know the rest of the story.

I'm sure that all of you recognize the name Paul Harvey, a radio commentator from Chicago who uncovers a lot of fascinating background information on famous people and uses captivating words and phrases to tell us "the rest of the story." I'm sure you all recognize the name Walt Disney. You probably all have a favorite movie of Walt Disney's and probably a favorite Walt Disney character. Mine happens to be Peter Pan. I dream a lot about flying. Flying with my arms outstretched, not in front of me, like Superman, but to the sides, like Peter Pan. I think I fantasize about being



eternally youthful and always taking care of those who are in need. I have to be careful though, especially lately, because of that new book *The Peter Pan Syndrome*. But I do enjoy Walt Disney and his work. As Paul Harvey wrote, "All the boyhood promises could not bring that one little owl back to life, through its death a whole world of animals came into being." From a tragic event in the early days of Walt Disney came life, and Walt Disney left a legacy of fantasy, laughter and joy.

Hymns and Songs

The following list of hymns is a start to locating appropriate hymns from your own religious tradition that bring the message of hope and giving that organ, eye, and tissue donation and transplantation provide.

Amazing Grace

Bless Me Now

Blest be the Tie that Binds

Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast

God Be with You

God Leads Us Along

God Will Take Care of You

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

Heavenly Father, Bless Me Now

Hope of the World

I Need You to Survive

I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath

Immortal Love, Forever Full

It Is Well with My Soul

Jesus, Lord, We Look to Thee

Jesus, Lover of My Soul

Jesus, United by Thy Grace

O God, Whose Will is Life

*O Son of Man, Thou Modest
Known*

O That Will Be Glory

O Thou Who art the Shepherd

O Young and Fearless Prophet

Oh, To Be Like Thee

Open My Eyes, That I May See

Rescue the Perishing

Sweet Hour of Prayer

*Take My Life and Let it be
Consecrated*

Take My Life, And Let It Be

The Voice of God is Calling

There'll Be Shouting

To God be the Glory

We Give Thee but Thine Own

We'll Never Say Goodbye

*What a Friend We Have in
Jesus*

Jewels

Lift up Our Hearts, O King of Kings

*Lord, Whose Love Through Humble
Service*

What Wondrous Love is This

Wonderful Peace

Wonderful Story of Love

Honor Walk Inspirational Readings

To Remember Me

The day will come when my body will lie upon a white sheet neatly tucked under four corners of a mattress located in a hospital busily occupied with the living and the dying. At a certain moment, a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my deathbed. Let it be called the Bed of Life, and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to the man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman.

Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain.

Give my blood to the teenager, who was pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play.

Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week.

Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body, and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that, someday, a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her window.

Burn what is left of me, and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow.

If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all prejudice against my fellow man.

Give my sins to the devil..... Give my soul to God.

If, by chance, you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you.

If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

—Robert N. Test

Prayer

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

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 that 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 housed within us, because of our offering of love, become the flame of life for others.

Amen.

Bequest

So white.

Now I lay me down upon a sheet so white.

No more.

My brain can hear your voice no more.

But wait.

These eyes,

This heart,

This kidney;

These bones, skin, blood, nerve still can serve.

As Christ gave His body and His blood for me, Now let me give this gift to thee.

Take these eyes and let them see.

Let this skin feel again and be.

Accept this organ to make her whole, this blood to speed him on his way, then blessed Lord, receive my soul.

—Herbert Nelson

Somewhere

Somewhere, your eyes still see the earth below... and the skies above

Somewhere, your heart still beats even stronger... full of love

Somewhere, your legs can still play, run and dance

Somewhere, you've given SOMEONE... a second chance And...

Somewhere, when I'm touched by those who, again, can live and see

Somewhere, I know your life goes on... and you're still here with me...

Somewhere

— A poem by Susan Morgan for her son, Drew

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