



**MONDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2008** Last modified: Friday, November 14, 2008 6:58 PM CST

### **Donor Sabbath aiming to bring transplant discussion to church**

By Heidi Terry-Litchfield  
Herald Staff Writer

DWIGHT - For many people, the decision to become an organ donor is a tough one.

This weekend, from Nov. 14 through 16, churches and faith organizations throughout the United States are joining together to celebrate National Donor Sabbath.

While you might say Adam and Eve were the first successful transplant, today people don't often hear about the medical procedure in their place of worship.

Rev. W. E. Dewey of Trinity "Goodfarm" Lutheran Church said that, after witnessing someone waiting, hooked to a machine to keep his blood pumping for a year at Loyola University Medical Center, the idea to join in the event was easy.

"I watched this man wait for a year for a new heart," he said.

"There are 25 different body parts that can be used depending on their condition. That is so many lives."

Dewey said often people question what their religion's beliefs are about the donation of organs and tissue, but several groups have organized data showing the majority of religions, both Christian and non-Christian, are supportive of the practice.

He said he has written a sermon to discuss the issues with his congregation and, in doing so, will share the stories of some of the people he's met or learned about.

"One of the stories in my sermon is about a man who is finally able to get a heart," he said. "His heart came from a teenager who was involved in an accident. A year after he received the heart, he met the family who was responsible and he had a stethoscope with him and he handed it to the mother and told her to listen to her son's heartbeat."

He said there are many emotional stories to share about donation and what it can mean to a child or an adult who has been waiting.

Dewey said the most important thing to do is to talk over your wishes with your family so they know what you want.

"After you are gone, it is up to your family to decide whether they will follow your wishes, so it's important they know so it is not a surprise," he said. "Many people are sensitive to the

issue and don't want to discuss it."

He said many not only worry about the religious implications, but also they are afraid that for the viewing there will be cosmetic changes that will alter how the person looks. That, he said, is not true.

"My wife and I have made it very clear to our family that we welcome them to use all organs and tissue available," he said. "By telling them, there is no delay and they don't lose the opportunity to harvest them."

Dewey said he feels it is important for churches to bring up the conversation and not look the other way.

"I feel we should help give them the information and encourage it so they can make the decision for themselves," Dewey said.

He said many don't think about it until it affects their family - either as a recipient or as someone being approached to donate.

"Until you sit in the wards and meet the people waiting for an organ, you won't understand," he said. "We don't need these parts; when the Lord comes, he will put us back together and we will be whole."

He said if God could create us the first time from a speck of dirt, he doesn't need much to do it a second time.

The Gift of Hope organization in Elmhurst has a Web site and literature addressing the religious views on organ and tissue donation. It can be found on the Web at [www.giftofhope.org](http://www.giftofhope.org).

#### Religious Viewpoints on Organ and Tissue Donation

Assembly of God - The decision to donate is left to the individual, with encouragement to discuss the decision with one's family.

Buddhism - Buddhists believe donation is a matter of individual conscience, and they place high value on acts of compassion.

Catholicism - Roman Catholics view donation as an act of charity and love.

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."

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) - The Church encourages its members to consider the possibility of donation and to communicate wishes to family members, physicians, and healthcare institutions.

Islam - Muslim scholars of the most prestigious academies are unanimous in declaring that organ donation is an act of merit and in certain circumstances can be an obligation.

Lutheran Missouri Synod - The Church encourages organ donation as an act of Christian love, but the choice is left entirely up to the individual.

Presbyterian - The Church issued a formal resolution in support of donation.

United Methodist Church - The Church recognizes the life-giving benefits of organ and tissue donation and, in a policy statement, encourages all Christians to become organ and tissue donors.