

A Practitioner's Guide to **Culturally Sensitive Practice for Death and Dying**

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Dedication

*We would like to dedicate this publication
to our families in appreciation of their support,
encouragement, and unending belief in our potential.*

*We would also like to thank all the Social Workers
who have paved the road for us. It is our sincerest wish
to make them proud.*

Merri, Sue Ellen, & Dede

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to educate health care professionals in all areas of practice regarding religious and cultural beliefs in reference to end of life issues. This information is imperative to the helping process, and when utilized, will allow practitioners to provide the best possible service to clients. The following information is to be used as a general guideline and should not be considered definitive with respect to an individual's personal, religious, or cultural beliefs and perceptions. This manual is a collaboration of materials collected with the purpose of assisting practitioners in facilitating culturally and religiously sensitive service at this extremely fragile time in the helping process. In many circumstances, a lack of awareness or information deters professional engagement in times of grief and loss. This disengagement may be misconstrued as a lack of compassion, when in fact, the practitioner may lack the knowledge and cultural understanding required to serve diverse populations. This resource manual has been designed to enhance the multicultural perspective to include the traditions and beliefs of varied religions, denominations, and institutions concerning death and dying as a valuable component of practice applicable to diverse settings and professions. We encourage health care professionals to utilize this tool, and when in doubt, to consult with the client. It is vital to remember that diversity exists not only between religions, but also within.

In order to effectively reference this manual, the following definitions are offered:

- **Afterlife:**
 - the belief in one's existence after biological death
- **Artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life:**
 - includes any means of assistance or intervention with the intent to artificially maintain vital signs
- **Burial ceremonies:**
 - specific rituals concerning body preparation, funerals, burial ceremonies, and body disposition (cremation, ground burial, and burial at sea)
- **Organ donation: ***
 - the act of an individual client or family member choosing to give or receive a donated organ
- **Other:**
 - any pertinent information related to end of life issues and specific to the identified religion, denomination, or institution

** One of the biggest misconceptions is that organ donation is against a person's religion. It is important to note that most religions in the United States support organ donation. According to William W. Pfaff, United Network for Organ Sharing, "Most religions see organ donation as the ultimate act of charity" (UNOS, 1998).*

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African Methodist Episcopal Church

The beliefs and traditions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and Hell, and in salvation of the soul through atonement. Church doctrine states that every person shall appear before God for judgment of personal deeds and resurrection to eternal life or eternal damnation.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The use of artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life is an individual and family decision. While church doctrine does not address this practice, it is widely accepted by clergy.

Burial Ceremonies:

Personal preference is respected. Church doctrine does not specify.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual and family choice with the practice sanctioned by the church doctrine.

American Evangelical Christian Church

The beliefs and traditions of the American Evangelical Christian Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and in salvation of the soul through atonement.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Until a person is pronounced brain dead by a physician, every opportunity should be made to save that life. This includes the use of respirators, dialysis, etc.

Burial Ceremonies:

This denomination believes that cremation is a pagan custom that the Bible associates with penalty or punishment. Members of the American Evangelical Christian Church are instructed to be buried.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by the denomination.

Other:

Assisted suicide is considered murder by the American Evangelical Christian Church. This denomination believes that every effort should be made to follow God's commandment to make everyone comfortable and to ease suffering and pain, but assisted suicide is not an option sanctioned by the church.

Anglican Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Anglican Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and in salvation of the soul through atonement.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The Anglican Church does not prohibit attempts to prolong life. Congregation members are encouraged to look at the situation and make decisions based on the circumstances. For example, if the ill person appears to have no chance of survival, the family might consider the withdrawal of life sustaining measurements.

Burial Ceremonies:

Caskets should be covered with a cloth pall and flowers are not brought into the church. A 1928 Book of Prayers, containing the ceremony for the Burial of the Dead, can be utilized during burial ceremonies. Cremation and open caskets are not prohibited. Final disposition is either by burial or cremation, and the cremated ashes are buried or placed in a vault.

Organ Donation:

The Anglican Church does not prohibit the giving or receiving of body organs. In fact, the church views this practice as a "Gift of Life".

Other:

The church encourages health care professionals to summon a priest if death is imminent, so that the dying person may receive the oil of unction and prayers from the Book of Common Prayer. Assisted suicide is not supported by the Anglican Church.

Anglican Catholic Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Anglican Catholic Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and in the salvation of the soul through atonement.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

All medical and scientific knowledge is a gift from God. When there is potential for recovery and good health, this denomination sanctions the use of artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life. However, when there is no hope of restored health, prolonging life through artificial means is no longer sanctioned. Church doctrine stresses the significance of quality of life when making these decisions.

Burial Ceremonies:

This denomination believes that the body should be disposed of in a reverent manner. Although ground burial is the most common form of disposition, cremation, and burial at sea are also allowed.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by the denomination. The individual should be deemed to be mentally competent to make this decision. According to church doctrine, the body is a vessel that houses the soul until earthly death.

Other:

Assisted suicide is contrary to the will of God and condemned by this denomination.

Assemblies of God

The beliefs and traditions of the Assemblies of God with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Members of the Assemblies of God believe humanity's hope for salvation from sin and eternal spiritual life is through Jesus Christ. They believe righteous living and faith as Christians who follow in Christ will one day rise from the dead and meet the Lord in Heaven. At that time, those Christians who are still living on earth will be raptured to join with individuals who have risen from their graves. Those who have lived a life with God will live eternally in Heaven. Those individuals who have failed to accept Christ as the Savior experience total separation from God in Hell.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The Assemblies of God are supportive of every opportunity for personal decisions for or against artificial support technology. A decision made after prayer, consultation with a doctor and a respected spiritual leader is recommended.

Burial Ceremonies:

The burial ceremony will usually take place in a funeral home soon after the death. An open casket is preferred. The pastor will deliver a short sermon followed by a tribute to the deceased. Musicians may be present at the ceremony to sing. An interment follows the funeral ceremony. It is common for prayers, scripture readings, and songs to be said and sung. Church doctrine does not encourage cremation. Assemblies of God members believe traditional body burial is congruent with the method of burial found in the Old and New Testaments. Cremation is perceived to have originated as a pagan practice and may be viewed as a non-Christian method of burial. The church acknowledges extenuating circumstances when cremation cannot be avoided. Assemblies of God members assert there is no evidence found in the Bible that claims a Christian will be denied the opportunity for eternal life in Heaven if the individual were cremated.

Organ Donation:

Assemblies of God members believe that organ donation is permitted as a selfless act of giving life. Believers encourage families to discuss organ donation and transplantation. Prayer to recognize God's will is significant when contemplating the decision to donate organs.

Atheism

The beliefs and traditions of the Atheism organization with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Atheists do not believe in the existence of God in any form, and have no belief of an afterlife. Atheists feel that each man or woman creates their own destiny, and that death is the end of all spiritual or biological life.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The use of artificial means of sustaining life is an individual and family decision.

Burial Ceremonies:

There are no specific burial ceremonies or rituals that atheists follow.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is a personal choice.

Baha'i

The beliefs and traditions of the Baha'i religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

The Baha'i religion believes that after death the soul of a man permanently departs from the body and enters a world of spirits, which may go on forever. The soul is released from its tie with the body and embarks on a journey through the spiritual world. The concepts of Heaven and Hell are perceived as a nearness or remoteness to God, and are a result of each individual's attempt to develop spirituality.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Baha'i religion does not prohibit artificial means of prolonging life.

Burial Ceremonies:

The burial of the dead is considered a very solemn and important occasion. The Local Spiritual Assembly should educate members about Baha'i burial laws, but decisions are often made by family members. These laws oppose cremation and do not permit the body to travel more than one hour from the place of death. In addition, the prayer for the dead must be recited twice if the person is older than 15 years. Funerals should be carried out in a simple and dignified manner that would credit the community. At the funeral, a congregational prayer for the dead must be read before the burial. Closed caskets are most often seen, as believers of the Baha'i faith do not believe in embalming.

Organ Donation:

As long as the body is respected and Baha'i burial requirements are met, organ donation is allowed.

Buddhism

The beliefs and traditions of Buddhism with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

According to Buddhist beliefs, immediately after death a person enters a new incarnation or rebirth. The Buddhist perspective focuses on the importance of nearing the final moments of life with a peaceful state of mind as this time has a significant influence on the quality of life during the next incarnation. An individual experiences dying and rebirth in the form of reincarnation until they are freed from worldly emotions and suffering. Buddhists believe that if an individual's mind is peaceful, calm, and possesses positive thoughts prior to death, then there is greater potential for a happy rebirth. However, if the mind is experiencing anger, fear, or desire at the moment before death the individual will encounter an unhappy incarnation. Liberation occurs when selfishness and desire have been conquered. This type of freedom or relief from suffering is described as nirvana, the ultimate goal of Buddhism.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

All means of medical treatment should be utilized to sustain life.

Burial Ceremonies:

Buddhist funeral ceremonies share three commonalities: performance of good behavior, development of a calm mind, and meditation. Typically, the ceremony is held in the funeral home. Buddhist funeral ceremonies will always have an open casket, and the significance of viewing the deceased is to serve as a reminder that life is not permanent. The Sutras are a collection of Buddha's sayings, and are used to quote Buddhist traditions during the funeral ceremony. An interment will follow the funeral ceremony where prayers are said and the body will be committed to the earth. Individuals who are not Buddhist do not participate in the graveside ceremony. However, some Buddhists prefer cremation and final disposition takes place three to seven days after the death.

Organ Donation:

Buddhists have no objection to organ donation if it is in the pursuit of knowledge or for the relief of suffering for others. Organ donation is perceived to be an admirable act of compassion and mercy.

Other:

The path of Buddhism may be perceived as being focused on an individual's spiritual goals.

Baptist Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Baptist Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

According to the beliefs of the Baptist Church, there are two kinds of death. First, there is a spiritual death that may be described as the state of the person who does not know or experience fellowship with God through his son, Jesus Christ. The second type of death is known to be the physical death all people experience when their life on this plane of existence comes to an end. Members of the church also believe a person who has reconciled to God during life on earth passes into a spiritual state of being, enabling them to experience God in a new dimension in Heaven. Individuals have the inner capacity to share an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. Through this relationship and by God's grace, they may experience eternal life in Heaven. In Heaven, there is the absence of evil and the presence of God's glory that transcends anything one can experience in this life.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Members of the Baptist Church do not recognize a church law or doctrine in reference to organ donation. Members believe in the free will of the individual.

Burial Ceremonies:

A burial ceremony is viewed as a traditional way of bringing closure to a relationship with someone who has died. It is common for the funeral ceremony to occur a few days after the death. The service is thought to be a time for memorializing the deceased and providing comfort for the bereaved with the intent of invoking positive feelings for the family.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by this denomination.

Chinese

The beliefs and traditions of the Chinese culture with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Beliefs concerning afterlife vary depending on the individual's adherence to specific religious or cultural practices.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

There are no objections to this practice.

Burial Ceremonies:

White or yellow flowers are acceptable offerings at Chinese funeral services. Chrysanthemums are used most often. Roses, or any other flower with thorns, are not acceptable. Most funeral traditions are based in Taoism. The Chinese are usually buried, with the exception of those practicing strict Buddhism. Male and female family members sit separately at the service; males wearing dark clothing, and females wearing white clothing. Mourners are often greeted with a small gift from the family of the deceased containing hard candy and a red money envelope. The candy symbolizes sweetening the sorrowful occasion and should be eaten immediately. The money (usually a small amount) should be spent on something the receiver would consider a treat. These gift packets are also given out at the burial ceremony. Chinese tradition states that parents do not bury their own children, regardless of the age of the child. Therefore, Chinese parents do not traditionally attend the funeral of their own child. At the funeral service, the coffin remains open and is placed with the feet of the deceased facing the door of the chapel. This tradition is meant to encourage the soul to depart. A bowl of rice with chopsticks placed vertically in the rice is placed near the coffin. Funeral services last approximately two hours. At the gravesite, mourners should turn away while the casket is being lowered into the ground, as this is considered impolite to observe. Firecrackers meant to ward off evil spirits conclude the ceremony. A month of mourning is customary, but not always observed.

Organ Donation:

There are no objections to this practice.

Other:

Most Chinese hold religious beliefs based in Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, although some are Christian.

Christian Science Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Christian Science Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Christian Scientists believe in an afterlife and consider it to be another plane of existence. The spiritual man never dies; only a false, material sense-of-self is lost.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The official view of Christian Scientists is that each person is free to choose his or her own course of action. However, individuals who resort to life sustaining measures are believed not to benefit from Christian Science beliefs and teachings.

Burial Ceremonies:

The traditions of Christian Scientist include memorial services, which are held in lieu of funeral services, although this is not always the case. Closed caskets are most appropriate according to Christian Science beliefs, but should be left to the discretion of the individual or family.

Organ Donation:

The Christian Science Church does not prohibit organ donation, but feel that material methods contradict the spiritual and metaphysical beliefs of Christian Scientists.

Other:

The Christian Science Church does not support assisted suicide measures.

Church of Christ

The beliefs and traditions of the Church of Christ with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Members of the Church of Christ believe man has an immortal spirit and death occurs when the spirit leaves the body. The body is observed to be dead and the departed spirit returns to God.

Artificial Means of sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

There is no official burial ceremony practiced by the Church of Christ. The body is viewed with great respect as it is observed to be the tabernacle for man.

Organ Donation:

Mankind may choose to use the body for the good of others after the spirit leaves the body.

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

The beliefs and traditions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, commonly called Mormons, believe all people are spirit children of the Heavenly Father and as such, lived with him before their life on earth. They are sent to earth to live by faith and to learn and grow, physically and spiritually, thru earthly experiences. When the time on earth is fulfilled, death occurs and the spirit leaves the body, moving on to spirit world, which is a place of preparation. The body and the spirit reunite during the resurrection, never to be separated again. This gift was made possible by the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Heaven is where God lives and the future home of his followers. Those who are worthy to return to the presence of God and Christ will reunite to live with God in Heaven.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

When illness occurs, members should exercise faith in the Lord and seek medical assistance. However, when dying becomes inevitable, it should be seen as a blessing and a purposeful part of eternal existence. Members should not feel obligated to extend mortal life by means that are unreasonable. These judgments are best made by family members after receiving wise and competent medical advice, and seeking divine guidance through fasting and prayer.

Burial Ceremonies:

A Latter-Day Saint funeral is similar to traditional Christian funerals. It is usually held in the chapel and directed by the bishop. Deceased members are eulogized by remembering their life experiences and achievements. The funeral service consists of inspiring music, faith-promoting stories, and verses from the Scriptures. After the funeral service, the gravesite is blessed so that it may be a safe haven for the body to rest until the resurrection. The spirit of the funeral is one of hope and joy.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual and family choice with the practice sanctioned by church doctrine.

Other:

Those who are ill may receive the blessing of the sick. The individual is anointed with drops of olive oil, which has been consecrated for the blessing of the sick. A distinctive feature in reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day-Saints is the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon is acknowledged as holy scripture in addition to the Holy Bible.

Church of the Nazarene

The beliefs and traditions of the Church of the Nazarene with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and Hell, and in salvation of the soul through atonement. Church doctrine states that every person shall appear before God for judgment of personal deeds and resurrection to eternal life or eternal damnation.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

For those whom the application of artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life will not provide restoration of health, withdrawing or not originating artificial life support is permissible.

Burial Ceremonies:

Personal preference is respected. Church doctrine does not specify.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by the denomination. The denomination supports a morally and ethically fair means of distribution of organs.

Other:

Euthanasia, including physician assisted suicide, is incompatible with church doctrine.

Church of Scientology

The beliefs and traditions of the Church of Scientology with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

When the body dies, the *thetan*, or individualized unit of life energy, remains immortal. Scientologists believe they have led past lives, but do not embrace the contemporary definition of reincarnation.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

The ceremony is centered around the knowledge that the deceased has moved on to assume a new life. Mourners are encouraged to wish the deceased well in that journey.

Organ Donation:

Personal preference is respected.

Disciples of Christ

The beliefs and traditions of the Disciples of Christ with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Death for members of the Disciples of Christ is not the end, but rather, the beginning of new life. Disciples believe those who die justified by faith in Jesus Christ will live eternally with God in Heaven, as He alone is the savior of the world. Those who die without faith in Jesus Christ are separated from him forever.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Members of the church support Biblical authority to guide decisions in prolonging or sustaining life through advance medical treatment.

Burial Ceremonies:

A pastor presides over the funeral service usually held within one week after death. Pall bearers assist the casket into the funeral home or church. Prayers and readings are drawn from the New Standard Revised Version of the Bible. Interment follows where the pastor blesses the ground to be placed on the casket.

Organ Donation:

Disciples of Christ members base their beliefs for decision-making concerning organ donation upon Biblical guidance.

Other:

Disciples of Christ view the Holy Scripture as the authority for members to follow. Statements not supported by Holy Scripture are rejected by Disciple of Christ members.

Episcopal Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Episcopal Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and in salvation of the soul through atonement.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

For those who have not been declared brain dead, the use of life sustaining devices is a family and individual choice.

Burial Ceremonies:

Church doctrine does not require that a body be present at the funeral or committal ceremony, allowing for individual choice for burial in the ground, burial at sea, or cremation. The body should be dressed simply without cosmetics. The coffin should remain closed during the ceremony. Many families choose to bring the coffin to the church the night before the funeral service. A prayer vigil may be held at the church throughout the night. Family or individual choice can dictate the funeral service, but church doctrine addresses the committal ceremony. This ceremony should be simple and brief. Mourners must be able to see the bare ground that the coffin will be lowered into. Flowers should not cover the hole. Mourners should witness the lowering of the coffin into the grave or vault.

Organ Donation:

Personal preference is respected. Church doctrine does not specify.

Other:

A sacrament of healing involving a priest or bishop anointing the sick person's body with oil is often performed as a means of preparing the person for entrance into the afterlife.

Evangelical Lutheran Church

The beliefs and traditions of Evangelical Lutheran Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Evangelical Lutherans believe death of a baptized Christian who lived with the communion of the church is a time of thanks and celebration for the resurrection of the dead through Jesus Christ. Afterlife in Heaven is described to be living in the presence of God and afterlife in the absence of God is Hell.

Artificial Means of sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Evangelical Lutherans recommend examining the ethical questions pertaining to death, dying, and medical treatment to prolong life with prayerful thought. Artificial means of sustaining and prolonging life are employed when there is a reasonable opportunity for an individual's recovery to a meaningful state of existence.

Burial Ceremonies:

The body may be buried or cremated according to personal preference. In reference to traditional burial ceremonies, the worship book of the church encourages the use of a pall - a large cloth often times covered with a cross - to cover the casket completely from the time it is brought into the church until the time it is taken out. The purpose of the pall is to symbolize equality among all Christians despite appearance and expense of the casket. A Christ candle is often lit, and hymns of hope are sung during the ceremony.

Organ Donation:

Church doctrine supports organ donation as it may improve the quality of life for another individual. The Evangelical Lutheran Church supports donation of the physical body for medical research.

Greek Orthodox

The beliefs and traditions of the Greek Orthodox with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Greek Orthodox believe there is the death of the body and death of the soul. Death of the body is perceived as the separation of the soul from the body. The removal of God's grace from a person's soul is believed to be the death of the soul. Members of the Greek Orthodox church acknowledge an intermediate state of souls, described as the phase between the time when the soul leaves the body and the Second Coming of Christ. At the hour of death, angels (also called ethereal beings) obtain the souls of saints and demons seek the souls of unrepentant sinners. Souls of sinners experience the foretaste of Hell, called Hades, after their souls have left the physical body. Sinners experience the grace of God as a burning energy or fire while those who have a relationship with God experience God's grace as a divine light. Greek Orthodox members recognize the Second Coming of Christ, and at that time, souls of individuals who lived their life with the Holy Spirit will reunite with the elements of the body. When the soul joins the body once again, the individual becomes whole and is resurrected to live an eternity in the Kingdom of God.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The Greek Orthodox church does not expect excessively aggressive means of medical treatment to be induced to a terminally ill individual with the intention of prolonging the dying process.

Burial Ceremonies:

Greek Orthodox burial ceremonies occur in the church. There are traditional greetings to be offered to the family of the deceased. They are stated as, "May their memory be eternal," and "May you have an abundant life." It is common for there to be an open casket. Traditional rituals may be practiced by Greek Orthodox members when viewing the body. The Greek Orthodox may bow in front of the casket and kiss a cross or

symbolic icon placed on the chest of the deceased. Participation in these rituals are optional for individuals attending the service who are not Greek Orthodox. The priest leads the service and may read from The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom. Interment follows the burial ceremony where each person places a flower on the casket.

Organ Donation:

The process of organ transplantation should be ethically considered as to assure that it does not hasten one individual's death in order to benefit another.

Other:

Widows of the deceased may wear black attire for up to two years after the death. It is common for a memorial service to be held on the Sunday closest to the 40th day after the death. Memorial services honoring the annual anniversary of the individual's death may also occur per family request.

Hindu

The beliefs and traditions of Hinduism with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Hindus believe in reincarnation. Death is seen as the means of transition from one embodiment to the next, while the spirit ascends to Nirvana.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

Hindus believe in cremation as a means of releasing one's spirit from one's body. The family will build a shelter for the fire ritual. If a shelter is unavailable, a fire is built within the home. Relatives of the same gender as the deceased prepare the body for burial. If the deceased is unable to be prepared for burial at home, the family will make arrangements to perform this ritual at the mortuary. Doctrine allows for the fire ritual to be performed at a crematorium when necessary. Only men are allowed at the cremation site. If the body is being cremated at a crematorium, the designated "chief mourner" will expect to switch on the cremation machinery. After the cremation begins, family members return home, bathe and begin an official period of mourning that may last up to one year. Hindu doctrine encourages remembering the deceased with joy rather than grief. Male family members will collect the cremated remains, which are referred to as "flowers" and are sent or taken to India to be deposited. A memorial service will be held on the 31st day following the death, and at the one-year anniversary.

Organ Donation:

Hindu doctrine allows for organ donation, although this practice is embraced or excluded by individual members.

Other:

When at all possible, a Hindu will traditionally die at home. When death is imminent, family members prefer to bring the ill home to die. The ill person is placed in a room with his or her head facing east. Keeping a light near the ill member's head, the family will pray and sing hymns. If the dying member is unable to leave the medical institution, this practice will occur in the patient's room. It is important to allow someone to remain at the patient's side until death. After the patient dies, the body is moved with the head facing south. This is symbolic of the person returning to the lap of Mother Earth. The family or friend who is with the patient at the time of death will tie a cloth under the chin and over the top of the head, as well as tying the person's thumbs together and big toes together. The death certificate should be signed as soon as possible after death and the body allowed to be taken home and prepared for burial. Hindu doctrine forbids the practice of embalming. If the body of the deceased must be touched by a non-Hindu, disposable gloves should always be worn. Non-Hindus should never wash the body.

Islam/Muslim

The beliefs and traditions of Islam/Muslim with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Muslims believe that the soul leaves the body at the moment of death, and that Allah plans the timing of a person's death. All Muslims believe in an afterlife and must utilize their mortal life in preparation for the afterworld.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference should be respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

When a Muslim dies, it is preferred that only Muslims touch or prepare the body for burial. If a non-Muslim must touch the body of the deceased, disposable gloves should be worn; however, non-Muslims must never wash the body. Funeral ceremonies have evolved as traditions. The Koran does not cite specific regulations for funerals. Ideally, burial should occur within 24 hours following death. The body of the deceased is placed with the head facing Mecca, the holy city for Muslims. Family members or close friends of the same gender wash and prepare the body for burial, wrapping the deceased in a simple, white shroud. Cremation is forbidden. Muslims are buried with their face turned toward Mecca, and coffins are not traditionally used. A female mourner should cover her head and arms during the funeral ceremony. Flowers are not an acceptable offering at a Muslim funeral. A collection may be taken at the ceremony to pay the debts of the deceased. Some followers believe that only men should attend the actual burial ceremony, although a woman's presence is no longer forbidden. The funeral service, or Salat Al-Janaza, is usually performed in a designated area outside of the mosque. If the service is held inside a mosque, shoes are not permitted to be worn, and a designated area for storage is provided. With the exception of family members, men, women, and children will be seated in separate areas for the service. Mourners are given

an opportunity to pay their respects to the family of the deceased following this ceremony.

Organ Donation:

Whenever possible, the deceased should be buried intact, which discourages organ donation. In some instances, organ donation has been allowed, but only when medical need dictates.

Other:

Embalming is not permitted. A visitation period before the funeral or burial ceremony is not traditional.

Japanese

The beliefs and traditions of the Japanese culture with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Beliefs concerning afterlife vary depending on the individual's adherence to specific religious and cultural practices.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

There are no objections to this practice.

Burial Ceremonies:

Cremation is customary for traditional Japanese. A funeral service may be held before or after cremation takes place. The coffin can be opened or closed if the service is held before cremation. A photograph of the deceased is displayed if cremation occurs before the funeral service. Mourners are expected to wear black or dark blue clothing. Jewelry is not considered appropriate. Flowers sent to a Japanese funeral should be only white or yellow, without thorns.

Chrysanthemums are the most typical flower used. While yellow or white flowers are considered appropriate, a cash gift, or Koden, is the traditional funeral offering. The amount of money given is dictated by one's relationship to the deceased. A new white envelope, often provided at the service, should hold crisp bills. Small gifts are often given to mourners at the funeral service. The incense ceremony is open to participation by all mourners. After bowing to the family, kneel in front of the casket or photograph of the deceased, take a small amount of the incense provided, bring to eye level, and sprinkle it onto the burner. Hands will then be placed together in prayer. After bowing once more to the family, return to the other mourners. Japanese custom states that those attending the funeral service throw salt over their shoulder to purify themselves before entering the home of the deceased. A salt shaker will be provided outside the front door. A 49 day period of mourning called Shojingyo may be observed by the family.

Contemporary Japanese families may reduce or forego this period of mourning.

Organ Donation:

There are no objections to this practice.

Other:

Traditional Japanese funerals combine Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian beliefs.

Jehovah's Witnesses

The beliefs and traditions of Jehovah's Witnesses with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the dead are not aware of anything as they lie in the grave awaiting resurrection.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

There are no objections to this practice, with the exception of the use of blood transfusions, including plasma and platelets. Other means, such as dialysis, are acceptable.

Burial Ceremonies:

The funeral ceremony will take place at a funeral home or a Kingdom Hall. The casket can be open or closed according to family preference.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is not permitted, with the exception of transplants where no blood transfer is involved (ex.: corneas).

Other:

No last rites are performed. Post-mortems are left to the discretion of the family of the deceased.

Judaism

The beliefs and traditions of the Judaism Religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Orthodox Jews believe in bodily resurrection and in an afterlife, which will take place upon the coming of the Messiah. Reform Jews do not believe in bodily resurrection or a physical afterlife, in contrast; they believe in immortality of every person's soul, which will eventually return to God.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

A large percentage of Jews believe in the right to die with dignity. In many instances, if death is inevitable, no new procedures should be undertaken, but those that are ongoing should be continued.

Burial Ceremonies:

A funeral should take place as soon as possible after the person has died. Immediate family members will be involved in burial preparations. If a male child dies without a circumcision, one must be completed before burial. If an infant dies, a name must be given before burial is permitted. Funerals are held in synagogues, temples, or in a person's home. The body should be covered by a simple shroud and be placed in a wooden casket. Open caskets are inappropriate and are very rarely seen. The Orthodox Jew does not believe in cremation, although Reform Jews view this as an acceptable practice. Embalming is also not a widely practiced custom. Prayers for the deceased called Kaddish are recited. After the funeral, loved ones often tear clothing as a symbol of grief and mourning.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is not a widely practiced custom. Orthodox Jews strictly prohibit such activities.

Other:

No direct action to hasten death is permitted, including assisted suicide.

Lutheran Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Lutheran Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and Hell and in the salvation of the soul through atonement.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected. Church doctrine acknowledges the difference between preserving life by providing comfort and pain management, and postponing death. If medical technology is used with the knowledge and acceptance that God is in control of when a person dies, then the use of artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life is morally acceptable. Referenced opinion stresses that withdrawing artificial means of life support can be an act of faith that God has already taken the soul from the body.

Burial Ceremonies:

Services may be held in a church or funeral home. The casket may be opened or closed. Communion will be offered, with individual churches choosing whether to include non-Lutherans. The casket is carried to the gravesite. After the pastor blesses the earth and the mourners, a reception will usually follow.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by this denomination. Organ donation is a choice, not an obligation.

Mennonite

The beliefs and traditions of the Mennonite religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

According to Mennonite doctrine, followers who die as true believers will be resurrected and live with Christ for eternity. Upon resurrection, Christ will create a new earth and Heaven, and together Christ and the righteous will reign forever.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The Mennonite religion has no historical or Biblical precedence regarding life-sustaining measures. Personal preference should be respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

Funeral services should be held in a Mennonite church. The specific denomination will dictate whether opened or closed caskets are appropriate.

Organ Donation:

The Mennonite church supports the practice of organ donation.

Other:

The Mennonite Church does not support assisted suicide.

Methodist Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Methodist Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

This denomination believes in the concept of Heaven and in salvation through a personal belief in Jesus Christ.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

This denomination believes in the sanctity of life and in the dignity of death. While church doctrine does not specifically address this topic, individual and family preference is respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

Church doctrine allows for burial in the ground or at sea, and for cremation. Ashes can be disposed of reverently at the discretion of the individual or family. Funeral services are conducted with the intention of celebrating the life lived and of sharing faith as a Christian community. Caskets can be opened or closed at the request of the individual or family. Funeral rites can be conducted at the church, funeral home, or private residence.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice with the practice sanctioned by the denomination.

Native Americans

The beliefs and traditions of Native Americans with respect to the indicated areas are as follows: *

Afterlife:

Many Native American tribes acknowledge the sacred circle of life and death involving the emphasis of integrity, balance, and completion. Death is seen as the beginning of a spiritual journey into the next world. The deceased spirit may need support from the living to make the journey. Rules and ritualistic practices may restrict behaviors of those who are living as a sacrifice in order to assist the deceased to pass on.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Beliefs among Native American groups vary.

Burial Ceremonies:

Sacred sites are often established on native soil where the body is buried. Traditions are holistic and refer to creation as a sacred circle connecting all aspects of life. Personal items, tools, cooking utensils, weapons, and food may be positioned near the body so that it may provide comfort in the next life.

Organ Donation:

Beliefs among Native American groups vary.

Other:

Among the many Native American tribes there is a shared belief rooted in spiritual reverence for nature. Supernatural phenomenon is commonly connected with natural occurring events.

* Please note, generalizations for Native American tribes are not realistic based upon diversity of cultural beliefs and ceremonial practices found among Native American groups. The information provided is rooted in common Native American spiritual beliefs linking humans, animals, and elements of life existing harmoniously in the community.

Paganism

The beliefs and traditions of the Pagan organization with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Pagans believe that a physical death is not the end of life. A deceased person becomes unborn once again, and after a time of healing and rest they will be reincarnated. In addition, Pagans believe that the physical body is reincarnated through decomposition and commitment of the ashes to land.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

The use of life sustaining measures is seen as an individual choice and permitted by the Pagan organization.

Burial Ceremonies:

Pagan beliefs include washing the deceased with a special mixture and anointing the body with incense. The body will then be wrapped or dressed in a simple cloth or clothing. At the funeral, special prayers are said to help guide the dead to healing in their afterlife journey. Funeral rituals also include offerings to nature, invoking spirits, music, and chanting.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is acceptable to the Pagan organization.

Pentecostal Church of God

The beliefs and traditions of the Pentecostal Church of God with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Pentecostal Church of God members believe Christians who have died will rise and meet the Lord during the second coming of Christ. At that time, Christians who are living on earth will join with those who have risen from their graves during the the rapture. They believe the soul is eternal and those persons who accept Christ will have everlasting life.

Artificial Means of sustaining or Prolonging Life:

According to the Pentecostal Church of God, artificial means of sustaining or prolonging life is a matter of personal choice.

Burial Ceremonies:

Pentecostal Church of God burial ceremonies may begin with scripture reading, prayer, and joyful singing. Members of the church may follow with hymns and worship to Jesus Christ. A sermon and eulogy are then performed by the minister.

Organ Donation:

If other individuals may benefit from organ donation, then the donor is supported to do so when the situation is appropriate.

Other:

Pentecostals believe in direct communication with God and that through prayer, divine healing may occur. When an individual is stricken with illness and pain, fellowship members often intervene with prayer, providing God with the opportunity for divine healing. Olive oil may be used as a medium to provide contact with the individual experiencing the sickness.

Presbyterian

The beliefs and traditions of the Presbyterian Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

According to Presbyterian doctrine, Heaven is a place where faithful followers will be reunited with God and live in perfect holiness and joy. When a person dies, his/her soul goes to be with God to await a final judgment. Upon judgment, eternal rewards and punishments are delivered and the body and the soul are reunited. Additionally, Presbyterians believe that how one lives one's life will decide where that person will end up after death.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

There are no specific religious doctrines that prohibit life-sustaining measures.

Burial Ceremonies:

Open caskets are rarely seen in Presbyterian funerals. Funeral services follow the same order as Sunday worship services, and include prayers for the deceased, Bible verses, and hymnals.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is generally accepted but specific preferences of the individual should be verified.

Quaker (Society of Friends)

The beliefs and traditions of the Quaker religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

The Quaker religion is without formal creeds. There are three sets of accepted beliefs concerning afterlife: the good and evil of an individual will live on in those born after them, rebirth or reincarnation is possible, and the life one leads will determine their destiny into Heaven or Hell. It should be noted that not all Quakers believe in the existence of Heaven and Hell.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected. Church doctrine does not specify.

Burial Ceremonies:

Quaker funerals can be either 'programmed' or 'unprogrammed.' Programmed funerals include singing, prayers, Bible readings, and sermons. Unprogrammed funerals, like unprogrammed church services, are held in silence, with worshippers speaking only when moved by God. Guests who are not Quakers are invited to participate. Open caskets are rare. The graveside ceremony is usually reserved for close family members. As there are no clergy in the Society of Friends, elders or overseers will conduct the service.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual and family choice. Church doctrine does not specify.

Rastafarian

The beliefs and traditions of the Rastafarian religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Rastafarians believe in salvation through Jesus Christ.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Any treatment that contaminates the body is considered inappropriate; therefore, certain life sustaining measures are prohibited. The individual or their family should be consulted prior to any measures taken.

Burial Ceremonies:

Routine last rites are appropriate and burial is preferred.

Organ Donation:

The Rastafarian religion prohibits organ donation.

Other:

Rastafarians emphasize a personal commitment and relationship with God. There are no official churches or clergy.

Roman Catholic Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Death is the fulfillment of a sacramental life. Roman Catholics believe in the existence of Heaven and Hell.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Roman Catholics are obligated to take ordinary means to sustain life. There are no objections to this practice.

Burial Ceremonies:

Roman Catholic tradition includes a wake prior to the funeral service, allowing mourners to pay their respects to the deceased and to family members. Coffins may be opened or closed at the wake. Funeral masses are only allowed in parish churches, not funeral homes or cemetery chapels. A Sacrament of Holy Communion will be offered at the mass to Catholics only. Following the funeral mass, the Rite of Committal can be performed at the parish church or at the grave site. Until 1963, cremation was forbidden by the Vatican. When amending the rule, cremation was allowed with accompanying regulations. Special dispensation is usually required for ashes to be brought into the church for a funeral mass. It is strongly suggested that the body be present for the funeral, with cremation following. The cremated remains should be either buried or entombed, and be treated with the same respect one would use when moving a casket. Church teachings discourage the scattering of ashes or the practice of keeping ashes in one's home. In all services, family, culture, traditions, and local customs are respected.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is justifiable and an acceptable practice.

Other:

Anointing of the Sick is not reserved for those near death, but also given for those who are very sick or aged. This sacrament can be received any time a person is facing a grave illness, and can be repeated as necessary.

Seventh Day Adventist

The beliefs and traditions of the Seventh Day Adventist religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Seventh Day Adventists believe that death is a temporary unconsciousness, much like sleep, while that person waits for the resurrection of Jesus. Followers believe in Heaven, where they will reside with God in a renewed earth.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Methods of sustaining life are allowed and supported, as Seventh Day Adventists believe in prolonging life.

Burial Ceremonies:

Funerals take place in either a church or funeral home, and open caskets are appropriate.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is supported and ultimately left to the discretion of each person or family.

Other:

Assisted suicide is prohibited according to the Seventh Day Adventist Religion.

Sikh

The beliefs and traditions of the Sikh culture with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Sikhs do not embrace a belief in reincarnation. Sikhs believe in an afterlife with God (Akal Purakh).

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

There are no objections to this practice.

Burial Ceremonies:

Non-Sikhs are allowed to care for the body of the deceased and to prepare it for burial. Traditionally, Sikhs are cremated, but burial is considered acceptable, especially for stillbirths and neonates. The body may be displayed for mourners before cremation, although cremation usually occurs as soon as possible. Family members and mourners are encouraged to display little emotion as a means of respect toward the will of Akal Purakh. Hymns and prayers accompany the cremation service, and the next of kin is usually responsible for pushing the button to begin the cremation process. Sikh doctrine encourages ashes to be scattered either at sea or in running water. Additional ceremonies may be held during the traditional mourning period of two to five weeks.

Organ Donation:

There are no objections to this practice.

Unitarian Universalism

The beliefs and traditions of the Unitarian Universalism religion with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

The beliefs of the Unitarian Universalism Church do not include concepts such as Heaven or Hell. Most individuals simply do not know what happens after death and therefore, do not subscribe to a particular religious belief in afterlife. Their faith is based on a scientific view of life, which encourages followers to live in the here and now.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Life sustaining measures are accepted by the Unitarian Universalism religious faith.

Burial Ceremonies:

Burial ceremonies consist of a memorial service and usually involve cremation of the deceased. Open caskets are rarely observed.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is supported and perceived as a good way of recycling the body.

Other:

Unitarian Universalism is considered a liberal approach to religion, which encourages each individual to discover his or her own beliefs. Most followers do not literally believe in the Bible and view religion as an institution to each individual. Assisted suicide is widely accepted by the Unitarian Universalism faith.

Unity Church

The beliefs and traditions of the Unity Church (non-denominational) with respect to the indicated areas are as follows:

Afterlife:

Unity Church members perceive death as another level of living and as an existence past the physical realm. One's spirit lives on after there is a release of the physical body.

Artificial Means of Sustaining or Prolonging Life:

Personal preference is respected.

Burial Ceremonies:

Members believe there are no specific traditions regarding burial practices and ceremonies. The Unity Church respects personal preference when preparing a burial ceremony.

Organ Donation:

Organ donation is an individual choice.

Other:

Religious doctrine, church law, etc. are not recognized by the Unity Church.

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