

Child death blamed on religious beliefs

NEW ARTICLES

EXTRA REPORTER 📅 OCTOBER 29, 2017

Emmanuel Kafe

A Jehovah's Witness lost her baby during childbirth because she and her husband followed church teachings and turned down blood transfusions that could have averted the tragedy.

Getrude Seneri (28) said she experienced labour complications on September 20, 2017 and doctors said blood transfusions were necessary to save both her and her child. Jehovah's Witness lost her baby during childbirth because she and her husband followed church teachings and turned down blood transfusions that could have averted the tragedy.

However, the couple stuck with their religious beliefs resulting in the child dying and her husband, Misheck Bande, stepped in to authorise transfusions for her when he was told that his wife's life was also on the brink.

Now, the couple have denounced the church for its teachings on blood transfusions

There are 8,3 million Jehovah's Witnesses in the world, and they are prohibited from getting blood transfusions "even in matters of life and death".

Jehovah's Witnesses say the Bible prohibits ingesting blood and that Christians should not accept blood transfusions, donate or store their own blood for transfusion as dictated by a policy dating back to 1945.

While forbidding the transfusion of blood and "major" blood components, the church allows procedures involving "minor" blood components like albumin and immunoglobulins.

Price too high

Opening up to The Sunday Mail Society last week, Seneri and Bande spoke of how they were initially willing to risk their lives for their religious beliefs – but had changed their minds after the loss of their child.

Seneri said after the ordeal, some members of the church had spoken of their admiration for her faith, but inside she felt that it had been a price too high. Bande, who was a Witness for the past 18 years, narrated how for three weeks prior to the loss of the child, doctors had warned that transfusions would be necessary but faith had held firm over science.

“At first doctors tried by all means to convince us hoping that (Seneri) would just break down and receive a blood transfusion eventually. They tried by all means to stop the bleeding, the last ditch was to transfuse blood in her system so that she could live but as fate would have it, we lost the baby,” recounted Bande.

It was at this point that Bande said he started questioning the JW teachings on blood.

“We started to read more and more of the Bible, and found things that the Jehovah’s Witness publications got wrong,” he said.

Absurd literalism

Among the problems the couple and other people have with the JW interpretation of Genesis 9:5-4.

In those verses, God instructs, in part: “But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood. Surely for your lifeblood I will demand a reckoning...”

However, critics say this is in reference to actual consumption of animal blood and not life-saving transfusions using human blood.

Opponents of the JW interpretation say the use of the cited Biblical verses amount to nothing more than “absurd literalism.”

Further, they say the church speaks of believers not being bound by Mosaic Law but in this instance turn around and use it for doctrine and policy.

Standing firm

A spokesperson for the church in Zimbabwe, John Hunguku, told The Sunday Mail Society they could not compromise on their beliefs.

“We don’t accept blood transfusion based on scriptures, Genesis 9:4-5.”

He said the matter at hand was a religious one rather than a medical question: “Blood represents life, so we avoid taking blood not only in obedience to God but also out of respect for Him as the giver of life.”

Hunguku said church members who did otherwise were free to come back into the fold because “we always welcome them given that they want to repent and fellowship with us again”.

Not alone

Jehovah's Witnesses are not alone when it comes to rejecting blood transfusions.

Prince Marezva, an elder of the Johane Masowe Apostolic Sect said they were totally against blood transfusions and organ transplants.

"We believe that one's identity and life exist in the blood, even the behavioural patterns of human beings is in the blood. No wonder our elders used to inject herbs or certain medicines after piercing a part of the skin (kutema nyora). It's not good to be given blood that is not yours because it is in the blood that life exists," said Marezva.

Quizzed on what could be done in a situation that requires urgent transfusion of blood to members of the sect, he said it is up to the individual to decide between faith and science.

Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association president George Kandiero said transfusions were shunned because people feared taking in bad spirits from the donor's lineage.

But times are changing, albeit slowly.

"We have decided not to live a primitive life as culture is dynamic and is subject to change every day. We are embracing blood transfusion but a person has to go through some spiritual cleansing after blood transfusion," Kandiero said.

Another religious group that does not condone blood transfusions is the Church of Christ, Scientist (aka Christian Science). The church promotes healing of physical and mental illnesses and disorders through prayer, though things like broken bones can be set by physician before healing is sought from a Christian Science practitioner.

146 total views, 19 views today



POSTED IN: [EXTRA](#) [SOCIETY](#)