

Freedom for prisoners

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

This is the way Jesus introduced himself and his ministry at the synagogue in Nazareth. In the time that followed, Jesus healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, fed thousands and showed us how to serve the needs of others. Whether as individuals or as a community of faith, we are called into the service of those in need...not only to notice their need but also to do something about it. Our congregation is going to have the opportunity to help those who are suffering under the weight of medical debt. In fact, it will be much bigger than our congregation. All the churches in John Knox Presbytery are being invited to pool their resources and remove medical debt on a grand scale.

Unfortunately, medical debt can be all too easy to accumulate. In many cases, all it takes is getting sick or being involved in an accident. From that point, the existence of medical debt turns many people’s lives upside down. Home foreclosures and bankruptcies are common. A tarnished credit rating makes it next to impossible to take out a loan or to rent an apartment. In too many cases, trying to pay a medical bill depletes a person’s savings. Some have even become homeless. Even worse, a lot of people carrying medical debt do not pursue the care they need or fail to buy medications that will keep them healthy. Medical debt becomes a prison for them.

There is a way to help! September 21 is the International Day of Peace and our church will join all the churches in John Knox Presbytery to raise money to purchase and forgive medical debt for as many families as we can. Every dollar received will be sent to an organization called “RIP Medical Debt”. Their name says it all but here’s what they do. They will use the money donated in John Knox Presbytery to purchase medical debt from collection agencies...and forgive it! They are able to work this miracle because they typically can buy medical debt for pennies on the dollar. Every dollar they receive will be able to wipe out at least \$100 of medical debt for someone. Talk about bang for your buck!

Donating to this ministry is easy. You may contribute through your regular Sunday offering by placing your gift in the plate during worship. Please make your

check out to our church and mark it “RIP Medical Debt”. There is also an online giving option on the Presbytery’s website, jknox.org. While this ministry is being undertaken by the churches in John Knox Presbytery, it is in no way limited only to members of the Presbytery. Feel free to post information on your social media pages or invite your family or friends to be a part of what we’re doing. Together, we can impact a lot of families! Their debts forgiven, their credit rating improved, it's truly good news to the poor and freedom for the prisoner. God will accept what we offer and make it amazing!