

June 25, 2009



Dear supporters,

We, John and Wendy, are writing this letter to inform and invite you to engage with us as New Direction navigates a new time of transition.

John has served God, through New Direction, longer than anyone else. After 22 years of serving on the board, John came on as a staff member three years ago. In the primary role of staff counselor, John met with individuals struggling with their sexuality and experience of same-gender attraction and family members of same-gender attracted loved ones. His ministry has been precious in the Lord's sight and effective in the lives of those reaching out to New Direction for help. During these years, John also connected with various regional volunteers to offer encouragement, support and guidance.

In these three years, the national organization has navigated some setbacks, disappointments and challenges. We thought we could maintain active front-line ministry services, build regional volunteer points of contact and ministry, and develop quality resources for the church. However, in light of financial constraints and staff limitations, the board of New Direction has had to reassess our strategic directions as we seek God's face for the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of New Direction. We were trying to do too much and in being spread too thin, we were not able to maintain the quality of service we want to provide.

At the same time, God was opening significant doors for bridge-building ministry through speaking opportunities, online blog interactions, our writing and our resources such as our newly released "Bridging the Gap: Conversations on Befriending Our Gay Neighbours" DVD. It became clear that this was a new season for New Direction and that it was different than we had expected.

The front-line ministry offerings of counseling and support groups had always been an essential part of our ministry. At the same time, we were a national ministry, speaking all across Canada, with an international web presence, and yet only able to really offer front-line services in a small region in Ontario. For the last several years we have been trying to build a referral network of counselors so that New Direction could serve as a point of contact and referral rather than trying to handle all front-line ministry through our own office. After much prayer and discussion, we have made the difficult decision to transition nearly all front-line ministry services to outside referral counselors and ministries.

What this means on a practical level is that John will become one of our primary referral counselors in this part of Ontario and will engage those who contact New Direction through his private counseling practice. His formal staff contract will finish in August.

One of the hallmarks of New Direction was that we ensured that no one was turned away for personal ministry due to an inability to contribute counseling fees. We also knew, however, that with a transition to referral counselors, we could not expect those in private practice to carry the financial burden of seeing clients pro bono. And we did not want these individuals to fall through the cracks. Therefore, New Direction has budgeted for a monthly amount of \$700 to make

available for counseling subsidies. These funds will be applied in those cases where an individual is unable to cover their counseling fees and will be payable to the referral counselor.

As we make this difficult transition, we invite you to continue in your prayers and support for John, in his private practice, and for the ministry of New Direction.

Please consider these specific prayer requests:

- Pray for the individuals and families members who are hurting and struggling with the realities of same-gender attraction.
- Pray that God would bless John's private practice with a steady flow of clients.
- Pray that God would raise up more reliable referral counselors in other regions of Canada.
- Pray that the counseling subsidy amount would be fully funded and that the funding would increase as the need increases.
- Pray that God would strengthen the three remaining New Direction staff members as they juggle very demanding work loads.
- Pray for the new support group that John is initiating.

In the last year, New Direction received 22% less in charitable giving than the previous year. We have had to make some very difficult decisions in light of these financial challenges. Through it all, we continue to declare that New Direction is God's ministry and that we will trust Him each step of the way forward.

Will you prayerfully consider how you can commit to a monthly gift to continue to support God's work through New Direction? We would invite you to designate these gifts for "counseling subsidy" in support of referral ministry to John and others.

Thank you so much for the ways you have supported John and New Direction. We look forward to continued partnership and keeping you updated and informed of what God is doing through New Direction to create a safe place for same-gender attracted people to journey towards wholeness in Christ.

In Christ's service,

Wendy Gritter
Executive Director

John Howard
Counselor

*To see every gay and lesbian person encounter Christ
through friendship with a Christ-follower...*