

CCSAC Annual Report - 2015

The Centretown Churches Social Action Committee or CCSAC as it is commonly known has been bringing the churches in the central areas of our city together for over 45 years. CCSAC grew out of a recognition that by working together in collaboration and fellowship, more could be accomplished in meeting community needs. CCSAC's mandate includes advocacy for social justice, especially for issues relating to poverty.

Over the years, it has provided assistance for many worthwhile endeavours and continues today to be a principal support for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre, which is a vital resource to so many of the people living in the central part of the city. In 2015, member churches provided \$27,157.00 to CCSAC, most of which was used to support the Food Centre. In addition, individual congregational members gave a further \$32,984.00 to the Food Centre.

One of the highlights of 2015 was a retreat of CCSAC and Food Centre board members held in February. Joe Gunn (Executive Director of Citizens for Public Justice) was the able facilitator for the full-day retreat. The day's discussions focused on how CCSAC can better support the Food Centre, but also how it can work actively to highlight challenges affecting people living in central Ottawa – issues arising from limited resources, food insecurity, inadequate housing stock and the general sustainability of life for many who live in the downtown area.

The retreat has given impetus for further actions during the balance of 2016. A new member's information package has been developed. Work to expand the website is underway. In addition, the Food Centre organized a joint session on fundraising, with guest lecturer Dan Brunette of the Community Foundation of Ottawa, for both CCSAC and Food Centre board members.

CCSAC's main priority remains the Centretown Emergency Food Centre. In addition, however, we would like to strengthen the links between all our member churches, and find ways to highlight the many initiatives these congregations are undertaking to help those in need.

Many member churches are developing refugee sponsorship plans as the calendar year ends, with a few already welcoming families. CCSAC is endeavouring to serve as a clearinghouse for contact information as well as offering lists of needed or excess supplies.

Unfortunately, the Food Centre continues to face serious challenges from growing demand and rising prices. In addition, increased workload has arisen as the Food Centre transitions to a new, more complex database now required on a province-wide basis by the Ontario Association of Food Banks. This year, the Centre served 9760 people and again saw an increase in the number of families with children making use of its service. This represents a year-over-year increase of 4.4 %. Financial and food support from member churches and finding new ways to raise funds for the Food Centre will continue to be essential in the coming year.

Despite these challenges, the Food Centre enhanced its cooking demonstration program, with the guidance of a nutritionist from the Centetown Community Health Centre. The demonstrations feature the same items offered to clients and help to promote healthy eating and enhanced cooking skills.