

CCSAC Annual Report - 2016

The Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC)'s membership includes 23 churches in the central part of Ottawa. Monthly meetings offer member churches an opportunity to share information and undertake joint activities. CCSAC also ensures the common voice of central Ottawa churches is heard on various social justice or poverty-related issues.

CCSAC's top priority is our collective support for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre and the important work it does in serving some of our most disadvantaged neighbours.

In 2016, the Food Centre has been challenged by higher food prices and growing demand, including that arising from many government-sponsored refugees being given temporary housing in the Food Centre's catchment area. This year, the Centre served 10,126 people and again saw an increase in the number of families with children making use of its service. This total represents a year-over-year increase in clients of 3.4 %. As a result, much of CCSAC's effort in 2016 has focused on finding ways to supplement the resources already provided to the Food Centre by member churches and others.

Fundraising efforts took on many forms. CCSAC sold tickets donated by Morrisburg's Upper Canada Playhouse for its August charity performance. St. Peter and St Paul's youth group led a successful food drive; St. Andrews supported a summer lunch program for children of the Food Centre's client families; St. Giles hosted a Cameron Highlanders concert; and Knox Church mounted a dramatic reading of the Christmas Carol with proceeds going to the Food Centre.

And on October 16th, CCSAC held its first Walkathon, the success of which surpassed our best expectations by raising over \$13,000. This was also an excellent opportunity for people from member churches and many others to walk together in support of the Food Centre and to raise awareness of issues of poverty and hunger in central Ottawa. Elizabeth Kent, of St. Mathews, was the team leader for this very successful event.

In total in 2016, CCSAC churches contributed \$74,859.00 to our collective work. This includes church contributions to CCSAC and to the Food Centre. Individual parishioners of various churches also made personal donations to both CCSAC and the Food Centre directly and through fundraising events.

For 2017, CCSAC's top priority will continue to be maintaining financial and food support from member churches and finding new ways to raise funds for the Food Centre.

The updated CCSAC website (www.centretownchurches.org), under the guidance of Erin Felak, of St. Peter and St. Paul's and our communications committee (Anne Whitehurst of Southminster and John Pedersen of St. Peter's), continues to profile CCSAC activities as well as those of individual churches. In 2017, we hope to expand the website further.

This year, individual CCSAC member churches have been more active than ever. Many congregations are sponsoring refugees, or supporting them in other ways. Most are working on individual outreach activities within our community. Interestingly, some of our members are working closely with neighbouring churches to support seniors or provide other services collaboratively.

This summer, CCSAC also hosted a meeting at which a faith leader from Uganda told an inspiring story about how his war-torn communities were able to rebuild and move forward by helping one another.

The CCSAC Annual General Meeting this year was held April 20th at First Baptist Church. Guest speaker Rachel Robinson, Executive Director at The Well/La Source spoke about this day program's work with women in the central part of the city. Rev. Scott Kindred Barnes of First Baptist Church gave the opening prayer, Rev. Beth Bretzlaff of St. John's offered words and prayers to install the new officers for CCSAC and CEFC, and Rev. David Illman-White of Centretown United gave the closing prayer.

The Annual Volunteer Dinner was held at Centretown United Church on May 31st. Rev. Cheryle Hanna of Fourth Avenue Baptist Church and Rev. Scott Kindred-Barnes, of First Baptist Church, offered the grace and the closing prayer respectively.

CCSAC continues to actively support several initiatives that reflect our commitment to social justice and poverty reduction: Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and MultiFaith Housing Initiative. Several CCSAC members again participated this year in CPJ's nationwide campaign to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

The Annual Ecumenical Service for Social Justice was held at St. Peter and St. Paul's Anglican Church on October 2nd. Rev. Jared Driscoll led the congregation in the liturgy, and Rev. Michelle Terwilleger preached on social justice and abidance in Christ.

This year, CCSAC and the Food Centre jointly sponsored the latter's traditional Advent Service and luncheon on December 7th. Monsignor Kevin Beach of St. Patrick's Basilica, led the worship service and preached a homily

On behalf of our representatives, may I thank our member churches and clergy for their support and encouragement. In addition, I would like to thank representatives of CCSAC, the Food Centre management board and staff, and all volunteers for their continued commitment to those most in need in our community. I would also like to thank Vice-Chair, Elizabeth Kent, Nancy Jonah and Mary Mussell, our co-secretaries, Joe Courtright, our treasurer, Erin Felak, our website advisor, and John Pedersen our newsletter editor.

Kristine Burr
Chair, CCSAC