

CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE (CCSAC)
507 Bank Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1Z5



NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2015

IN MEMORIAM

Paul Dole, Chair of CCSAC for the past three years, passed away on Thursday, November 19. We wish to express our most sincere condolences to his wife, Patricia, and family. Paul was a long-time and devoted supporter of CSSAC and the Food Centre. In recognition of his great support for the CEFC, the Food Centre will posthumously award Paul The Betty Neelin Distinguished Service Award at its Advent Service on December 9. Paul and his inspirational leadership will be greatly missed by all our members.

NEWS FROM CENTRETOWN EMERGENCY FOOD CENTRE (CEFC)

After a very busy summer, marked by low donations, increased client numbers, tight food supplies, and extra work due to the new Link2Feed data program, work at the Centretown Emergency Food Centre is moving smoothly again.

For one thing, we have seen a marked increase in monetary and food donations to the Centre, and we are very grateful to the congregation members of our CCSAC churches for their generous support. For another, our staffing is more stable, with our new part-time assistant, Gladys McClement, who has extensive social work experience and knows our clientele well, and with Ixcel Mendez, our placement student. To ensure we keep up with Link2Feed intake, we have some extra help from two very capable students, Chelsea Veyvey and Trish Roy. And we benefit greatly from our large team of hardworking weekly volunteers.

For over a year now, we have noted an increase in the number of children, a direct result of the availability of more subsidized and emergency housing in our catchment area. There is turn-over in these clients when they are settled elsewhere, and a new family takes their place, so the time-consuming pattern of Link2Feed data intake must be repeated more frequently than in the past.

The Food Centre has enhanced its program of cooking demonstrations, with help from the nutritionist at the Centretown Community Health Centre. Gladys has done some popular slow cooking demonstrations too. They are very popular with clients and help to promote healthy eating and enhanced cooking skills.

Our Coordinator, Kerry Kaiser, works many extra hours to keep our Centre running smoothly. We appreciate that she also takes time to visit member churches and to attend CCSAC events. Looking ahead, she is already working on the Food Centre's list of families for the Christmas Hamper project organized by Centretown United Church.

FOOD CENTRE HOURS

Mondays: 12 pm to 2:30 pm Tuesdays, Thursdays & Fridays: 12 pm to 2:00 pm

NOTE: Christmas Hours of Operation

Thursday, December 24: 12:00 – 1:00 pm

Friday, December 25: Closed

Monday, December 28: Closed

Friday, January 1: Closed

UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, December 2, Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa's Christmas Concert, 7:30 pm at St. Giles Presbyterian, 174 Bank Street: Proceeds and food drive for the Food Centre.

Tuesday, December 8, Thirteen Strings' Christmas Candlelight Concert, 8:00 pm at Dominion-Chalmers, 355 Cooper Street: Free will offering at intermission for Food Centre.

Wednesday, December 9, Food Centre's Annual Advent Service and Pot-Luck Lunch, 11:30 in Centretown United Church Chapel, 507 Bank Street: The Rev. Jim Pot of Knox Presbyterian church will be guest preacher.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CCSAC

For many of us today, CCSAC, which is comprised of 23 member churches, is chiefly associated with its main project, the Centretown Emergency Food Centre. Besides this very important and essential community-based service, CCSAC has initiated and been involved in many social action projects over its almost 40-year history.

On October 14, 1967, both lay and clergy representatives of nine Centretown churches met at Knox Presbyterian to discuss if their churches could provide services for common Christian action and service in their community. As a result, the Headstart Nursery was begun at St. John's the Evangelist Anglican Church in September, 1968. This programme was designed to help prepare children to enter kindergarten at the same level as their more stimulated peers.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, CSSAC initiated other activities and programmes in Centretown in response to the social needs of the community. They included visits for shut-ins, English second language classes, the Elgin Street School Breakfast Club. From the early 70s until 1986, CSSAC sponsored the Monday Group in Dominion-Chalmers where volunteers shared friendship with people who had long-term emotional problems and difficulties coping in society.

In 1978, in response to the request of the Centretown Churches Ministerial Association for a central location where those in need might be referred, the Emergency Food and Clothing Centre was opened in McLeod-Stewarton (Centretown) United Church and operated by CCSAC.

Starting in the early '90s and for the next 12 or so years, CSSAC operated the Centretown Employment Support Programme to help those who were unable to access government employment centres. The Programme was no longer needed after the opening of the City of Ottawa's Social Service Centre on nearby Catherine Street.

In the last few years, CCSAC has been active in a number of ways to help raise awareness of poverty

related issues. In 2013, CCSAC made submissions to the Government of Ontario's Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario and to the provincial government's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. In October of 2013, 2014 and again this year, CCSAC members joined Citizens for Public Justice on Parliament Hill in their "Chew on This" campaign for the elimination of poverty in Canada.

CCSAC'S ANNUAL ECUMENICAL SERVICE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

CCSAC held its annual Ecumenical Service for Social Justice at Glebe-St James United Church on Sunday, October 25. In welcoming us, Kristine Burr, Chair of CCSAC, expressed CCSAC's gratitude to Marilyn Hamilton and the Rev. Teresa-Burnett-Cole for their excellent work in arranging this service at such short notice. Kristine also brought greetings from former recent Chair, Paul Dole, who unfortunately was unable to be at the service.

In her homily the Rev. Teresa Burnett-Cole reminded us that we had gathered together at this service because we have heard the gospel call to care for our neighbours. But who is our neighbour? Today, it is often a question of just who is the "us" and who is the "them".

Rev Burnett-Cole concluded by saying that while we give our time, money and food to the food banks, we know the need will always be for more. New challenges and needs will arise with new people at risk. People need us to keep being justice seekers. We need to realize that, like Christ, we are forever being called to care for those of us who are poor, those who live on the margins, those of us who are invisible to the dominant majority.

The social justice theme of the service was reflected in many of the hymns sung with familiar tunes but with new words that spoke of service to our neighbours. Also, in the scripture readings from Eugene Peterson's "The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language", we heard familiar passages in modern idiomatic English, which gave us a new and poignant way of hearing the call of the gospel.

CCSAC wishes everyone a Blessed Advent and a Joyous Christmas.