



CENTRETOWN CHURCHES
SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

*Uniting Christians of all denominations through
joint participation in social projects and prayer*

Annual Report of the Chair of CCSAC for 2017

The Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC), comprising 23 churches in central Ottawa, focuses on initiatives to help people who are isolated or living in poverty. CCSAC provides an opportunity for ecumenical collaboration amongst the churches of central Ottawa, with monthly meetings offering a valuable way to share information and ideas.

This year, CCSAC representatives were able to work together on several important issues. We submitted a brief to the Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy consultations on the needs of those living in urban centres. Subsequently, a small delegation met with Minister Catherine McKenna's staff to discuss its primary recommendation, endorsing a national affordable housing program which would, in turn, lessen dependency on food banks. CCSAC also wrote a letter supporting the findings of the Centretown and Somerset West Community Health Centres' report on rooming houses. In addition, CCSAC was invited to participate in several meetings reflective of ecumenicalism: the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January, and a joint service celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Reformation hosted by the Lutheran and Anglican churches in Ottawa.

CCSAC also actively supports several initiatives that reflect our commitment to social justice and poverty reduction: Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and the Multifaith Housing Initiative. Several member churches again participated in CPJ's nation-wide campaign to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

CCSAC's top priority is collective support for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre, which continues to be one of the busiest in the city. The Food Centre regularly faces the twin challenges of heavy client demand and rising prices. For the second year, CCSAC organized a "Walk for the Centre" to raise supplementary funds for the Emergency Food Centre. Roughly 200 people, both individuals and teams of walkers, including 17 energetic teams from member churches, turned out on the day of the event. In addition, many others from congregations and the broader community offered financial support. Despite a rainy day, the walkathon was a resounding success, with nearly \$20,000 raised.

Equally important, the Walkathon provided an opportunity for people to walk together to raise awareness of the challenges of poverty and hunger in central Ottawa. The planning committee for this event involved representatives from nine member churches.

In total, CCSAC member churches contributed \$59,000 to CCSAC and the Food Centre in 2017. This amount was raised from donations by parishioners to their churches, some



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directed specifically to CCSAC and some to the Food Centre. Other contributions from churches came from general church funds. Many member churches also hosted special fundraising events with the proceeds going to the Food Centre. In addition to the \$59,000 already mentioned, individual parishioners also contributed directly via the walkathon. Other important support came from the City of Ottawa, the Ottawa Food Bank, and food drives by local schools and service organization, plus generous financial gifts from individual citizens unaffiliated with any congregation. For all this, we are very grateful.

For 2018, CCSAC's top priorities will continue to be promoting collaboration amongst our membership, and maintaining support from member churches for the Food Centre. This will include a third "Walk for the Centre" in 2018.

Throughout the year, CCSAC representatives organize meetings or services designed to bring our community together. This year, we introduced an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast for CCSAC clergy and representatives, which was held at Canadian Martyrs Catholic Church. The Annual General Meeting, was held in April at the Church of the Ascension, with Rev. Rhonda Waters providing the opening prayer. Guest speaker Angela Keller-Herzog from Ottawa Centre Refugee Action (OCRA) spoke about refugee sponsorship and shared lessons learned from that group's experience. In addition, CCSAC annually hosts a dinner to recognize the 90-plus volunteers who work at the Centretown Emergency Food Centre, and also co-hosts, with the Food Centre's Management Board, an Advent Service and potluck lunch, both at Centretown United Church.

Further information regarding CCSAC, including a new section on meals and fellowship offered by member churches, can be found at our website:
www.centretownchurches.org.

On behalf of our representatives, I would like to thank our member churches and clergy for their support through the year. Thanks, also, to our CCSAC representatives, the Food Centre management board and staff, and all volunteers for their continued commitment. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of members of the CCSAC executive: vice-chair Elizabeth Kent; treasurer Joe Courtright;, and our co-secretaries Mary Mussell and Anne Whitehurst, as well as Erin Felak, our website advisor, and John Pedersen our newsletter editor.

Kristine Burr, Chair, CCSAC
January 28, 2018