



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 2019

The Centretown Churches Social Action Committee (CCSAC) is a federally incorporated Not for Profit Corporation and a registered charity. Its Board of Directors is comprised of representatives of 22 churches in central 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. Its ongoing priority is collective support for the Centretown Emergency Food Centre and the important work it does in serving those in need in central Ottawa. This year the Food Centre served 9050 people, including many families with children.

In 2019, member churches donated \$26.7 thousand to CCSAC, most of which was used to support the Food Centre. Approximately \$41.6 thousand was also donated directly to the Food Centre by various member congregations and their parishioners. After several years of decline, this represents an increase in overall financial assistance from the faith community. This generosity is very much appreciated as it is recognized that our church members support other valued ministries as well as the Food Centre. Other important donors include the City of Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Bank.

In addition, CCSAC organized another “Walk for the Centre” on behalf of the Food Centre in 2019. It attracted nearly 200 people including many teams from member churches, and raised over \$20,000. The walk also raised awareness of the lack of food security facing many in central Ottawa, and so we were very pleased with the strong turnout. City Hall has already been booked for a fifth “Walk for the Centre” on October 4, 2020.

CCSAC is a member of two organizations reflecting a commitment to social justice and poverty reduction: Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) and the Multifaith Housing Initiative. With respect to advocacy, in 2019 we wrote letters to provincial Cabinet Ministers expressing concern that proposed funding cuts to legal aid in Ontario would unduly impact vulnerable populations. CCSAC also wrote to the then-Minister of Families, Children and Social Development to encourage a strong focus on anti-poverty measures in the 2019 federal Budget.

In 2019, a small CCSAC committee embarked on a modest consultation exercise to identify ways in which we can do more to support those in need in Central Ottawa. To date, excellent discussions have been held with both central Ottawa food centres, the Centretown Community Health Centre, and the City of Ottawa. This work will continue in the coming year.

The CCSAC website (www.centretownchurches.org) promotes our work and reaches out to member churches and citizens. It offers lists of the food and fellowship services available at member churches, in the hope of reaching more people in need. The revamped CCSAC newsletter, now with a more modern format and colour printing, has been well-received. We are taking steps to deliver copies electronically wherever possible in order to reach a wider audience.

Throughout the year, CCSAC organizes meetings or services designed to bring our community together. The AGM was held at Blessed Sacrament Church on April 4th, with Father Tim Nelligan offering the opening prayer, and Willard Metzger, Executive Director at Citizens for Public Justice, delivering an inspirational speech on the role of faith-based institutions in today’s society. In May, CCSAC hosted a dinner to recognize the Emergency Food Centre’s 90-plus volunteers, and in December co-hosted, with the Food Centre’s Management Committee, an Advent Service and lunch, both held at Centretown United Church. Reverend David Illman-White of Centretown United gave the homily at this year’s Advent Service. In late October, we held an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast with the theme of “hospitality” for CCSAC clergy and representatives. This was hosted by Father Tim Nelligan at Blessed Sacrament Church.

On behalf of our representatives, may I thank our member churches and clergy for their support and encouragement throughout the year. In addition, as the current chair, I would like to thank representatives of CCSAC, Allison Dingle, the chair of the Food Centre Management Committee and Kerry Kaiser, the Centre’s able coordinator, and all volunteers for their continued commitment to this important work. I would also like to thank Elizabeth Kent, our vice-chair and leader of the walkathon committee; Anne Whitehurst and Mary Mussell, our co-secretaries; Joe Courtright, our treasurer; Erin Felak, our website advisor; and John Pedersen our newsletter editor.