



# CCSAC NEWSLETTER

## CENTRETOWN CHURCHES SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

May 2026

### Executive:

Chair: Kristine Burr  
Vice-Chair: Emmy Verdun  
Secretaries: Elizabeth Demaray & Mary Mussell  
Treasurer: Emmy Verdun  
Communications & Newsletter Editors: Mary Mussell & Lorna Kingston  
Facebook Coordinator: Anisha Eipe

### Member Churches:

Blessed Sacrament  
Canadian Martyrs  
Centretown United  
Christ Church Cathedral  
Church of the Ascension  
Dominion-Chalmers United  
Eglise unie St-Marc  
First Baptist  
Fourth Avenue Baptist  
Glebe-St. James United  
Knox Presbyterian  
Ottawa Quaker Meeting  
St. Andrew's Presbyterian  
St. Barnabas Anglican  
St. Giles Presbyterian  
St. John the Evangelist Anglican  
St. Matthew's Anglican  
St. Patrick's Basilica  
St. Peter's Lutheran  
St. Peter & St. Paul's Anglican  
St. Theresa's Roman Catholic  
Southminster United  
Trinity Anglican

### Our Mission:

To unite Christians of all denominations through joint participation in social projects and prayer.

### Get in Touch!

We would love to hear from you!  
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[Contact@centretownchurches.org](mailto:Contact@centretownchurches.org)  
[www.centretownchurches.org](http://www.centretownchurches.org)

## Ending Homelessness Is Possible

The Centretown Churches Social Action Committee's Annual General Meeting was held on April 28 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church. Guest speaker was Kaite Burkholder Harris, Executive Director of Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa (AEHO). This is a coalition of people and organizations working together to end homelessness and Ms. Burkholder Harris is a strong advocate for more and better housing.

At this time, only 40% of the population can afford the average housing rent of \$1680 a month. In Ontario there are approximately 85,000 people who are homeless. There are encampments in every city and town. It is estimated that by 2035 there could be as many as 30,000 more homeless.

In Ottawa this year there were as many as 4300 people in shelters throughout the city. This number includes families and women experiencing violence. About 556 people sleep on the streets each night in Ottawa and toxic drugs abound. On a positive note, Ottawa has had a number of housing starts.



*Kaite Burkholder Harris*

Currently someone needing assistance has to tell their story to multiple agencies. The hope is to provide a coordinated single entry to the system, intervene early and try to keep people out of the shelter system that often proves difficult to get out of once one's inside. The diversion and rapid re-housing process used in Calgary has been transformative.

## Matthew House Has a New Facility

This February, Matthew House moved to a larger facility on Industrial Road in Ottawa. They recently held a fundraiser that added \$78,000 towards the capital fund for the new facility.

Matthew House provides donated furniture and household essentials to families facing financial hardships including refugees and those exiting the shelter system.

Since 2012, Matthew House's Furniture Bank has helped furnish homes for more than 10,000 families, supporting 14,000-plus individuals. Referrals come from shelters, health centres and city systems. The program has also diverted more than 114,000 household items from the landfill.

*Your Centretown Churches Social Action Committee keeps busy working and advocating on behalf of our neighbours. Follow our activities on [www.centretownchurches.org](http://www.centretownchurches.org) and Facebook.*

# Spotlight On: First Baptist Church

By: Rev. John Perkin

Like most of the churches in CCSAC, First Baptist Church is busy not only on Sunday mornings.

Rev. John Perkin, the Minister of First Baptist, points out “On Sundays, we hold meaningful and rich worship, we have a fellowship hour after our service, and choir practice takes place. A lot happens in Blatchly Hall, our large downstairs common room. On Sunday evenings an Alcoholics Anonymous group meets here, and later Restoring Hope comes in to set up its youth shelter. The shelter operates seven nights a week, offering a safe, warm place for homeless youth. Those who seek refuge here are given supper and breakfast the next morning, but The Haven provides more than a bed. The young people who stay here find acceptance, safety, support, and guidance as they strive to transition into regular housing.

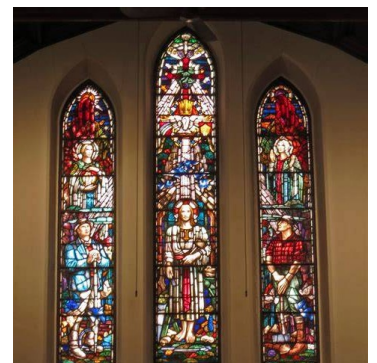
Since last autumn, Discovery University has been meeting here weekly. Discovery is a program for adults whose life circumstances have prevented them from furthering their education. Begun in 2007 under the leadership of First Baptist, the University of Ottawa, Cornerstone and the Ottawa Mission, the program’s goals are to provide those living on limited income access to new skills, intellectual stimulation, social connections and a renewed sense of confidence. Lectures take place on the UOttawa, Carleton and Saint Paul campuses, and volunteer-led discussion groups are held at First Baptist each Wednesday. At the end of each semester, a celebration of completion, open to all, takes place in our sanctuary.

Our Associate Minister of Discipleship Ema Price led classes on Tuesday afternoons last fall, providing a forum for companionship, conversation, and cookies! On several Saturday mornings and some evenings, the young people of the church have gathered under Ema’s direction for learning, activities, and fun. A community kitchen, currently on hiatus, has operated for several years, providing facilities to those without cooking facilities.

Our Administrator Patti Linn is in the church office each weekday morning, taking phone calls, responding to emails, and showing the facilities to those looking for a venue for a wedding or other special event. I am in the pastor’s office most mornings and many afternoons. And the church constantly offers a spiritual and practical refuge. Every week, people ring our doorbell. Some ask for assistance with food or to get a pair of clean, dry socks, or maybe seek counsel or direction for a pressing personal issue. And often, someone comes to the door seeking admission to the church as a place to sit, to contemplate, to pray ...

We rent space above my office, and many concerts and performances are held here during the year. Occasionally there are very special events. One February afternoon, dozens of Iranian-Canadians gathered in our sanctuary to hold a memorial event, honouring those taken by an oppressive government’s crackdown of protestors seeking greater rights and freedoms in Iran. I was pleased to participate in this event, demonstrating that First Baptist stands in solidarity with those mourning the loss of lives and seeking change in Iran. Given current circumstances in the Middle East, I wonder if we might see them return for another time of reflection and lament.

Our church occasionally hosts funerals and receptions, and more frequently weddings; there are several lined up for this summer. And above all else, First Baptist is a place for worship – where we gather in community, in faith and hope, and most of all in love. We gather to care for one another, to lift our minds and spirits above the cares of the world, to be mended and healed and challenged to enter back into the cares of the world, and to respond with the love and grace we experience in worship. First Baptist consists of our people and our ministry, but our building offers its own ministry, serving as a place of celebration and mourning, of hope and healing, of refuge from the world, a beacon of light shining *through stained glass*.



As I think of the twenty-one other churches that form the Centretown Churches Social Action Committee, I wonder about the activities and events that shape their ministry. I hope these can also be shared with us.”

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*Since 1978, CCSAC’s main project has been the Centretown Community Food Centre located at 370 Catherine Street.*