

In 2015 Bishop Tim asked Rev Lynn Parker (Benefice of Torpoint, Shevioc and Antony) and Rev Michael Goodland (St Germans Group Parish) to lead that year's exchanges with the parishes of Örebro and Hallsberg in the Diocese of Strängnäs, part of the

Lutheran Church of Sweden with its cathedral seat in Strängnäs south of Lake Mälaren.

In April, the assistant priest, deacon, and two members of the congregation came to St Germans Group Parish, and the churchwarden and three members of the Örebro church arrived in the Torpoint Benefice.



Staying with members of the congregations for the next week, they were introduced to many aspects of church life in the two parishes. The first afternoon we all met at Hessenford Church Hall for a meeting with Archdeacon Audrey who spoke about Discipleship, and over tea met the other participants in the visit. We all attended services, prayer groups, lunches, social

events, and visiting the local church schools, and both groups and their host parishes took part in a Day's Oecumenical Retreat in Looe, and a trip to Truro for a look around the town and shopping, and after lunch a visit and guided tour of the Cathedral led by the Dean, and tea in the Refectory. We showed them to see the beauties of Cornwall and entertained them for meals in our homes.

In early May the Cornish contingent, including both Vicars, an NSM, the curates and three laity flew together from London to Stockholm, from where we were taken by coach to our host towns. The week followed a similar pattern of events as we had offered to our guests in Cornwall. In Hallsberg we enjoyed Oecumenical Prayer Services following the Way of Life which our Swedish friends had enthusiastically embraced, we attended a Day Retreat at the beautiful Sockenkyrkan in the countryside, concerts, group meetings with the youth, and elderly, bible classes, and a trip out into the beautiful Swedish countryside of lakes and forests. We met up with the Örebro group on a day

out to Strängnäs where we enjoyed a meeting with the Bishop who showed us around the cathedral. One of our Cornish group was a railway fanatic and was delighted to look around Hallsberg which is home to the largest railway marshalling yard in Sweden and is proud of its very grand station. Our hosts were kind enough to take a couple of us to see an enormous model railway layout based on the Hallsberg marshalling yard and line. We visited a primary school but learned that none of the schools in Sweden are church schools so the church is unable to work in the schools as so many of us do here in Cornwall. However, I was very impressed by the provision of special welcome and language classes for the huge number of immigrants which Sweden has welcomed to settle there.

The hospitality and friendly welcome we enjoyed was wonderful, and we have been fortunate to be able to maintain links with Hallsberg, especially the Vicar, Jonas, who has consistently kept in touch and who brought a group of young people to Cornwall in June 2017 to stay on pilgrimage at St Endellion. We arranged that they should come to Donderry for a day and had planned a lunch in St Nicolas Church, and then some fun on the beach in the afternoon. Unfortunately, it was a typical Cornish day and the rain blowing horizontally so, having picked up the group of 20 from Bodmin Parkway which they got to by bus, we had a good lunch and enjoyed catching up with old friends. The Hallsberg visitors were very interested in our children's work with the local school and have constantly supported us in prayer since we met in 2015.

In Torpoint the Örebro churchwarden was very keen on the Street Pastor movement which was unknown in Sweden, and the Torpoint Street Pastor hostess was able to introduce her to this new way of being church on the streets. Since then, the two ladies have exchanged visits and they tried to introduce the movement to the streets of Örebro.

The differences in church organisation was striking, and we did not know whether to rise above such unChristian thoughts or whether to be envious of the Swedish church which is entirely supported and paid for by the state – all salaries, all the buildings and maintenance – and what buildings they had - lovely churches beautifully kept up, amazing church centres and facilities - yes we were green with envy, but upon consideration we decided that the effort and love for our parishes we worshippers have to give here shows somehow a deeper commitment to the Way. Interesting. (But I still regret the emphasis and resources we have to place on buildings often at the expense of mission.....!)

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(St Germans Group Parish)