

APPENDIX I**REPORT ON THE VISIT BY THE CHURCH OF IRELAND
TO THE CHURCH OF SWEDEN, NOVEMBER 2001**

The Archbishop of Armagh, the Bishop of Cashel, Ms Andrea Wills of Tuam Diocese and Ms Valerie Beatty, Porvoo Contact Group Member represented the Church of Ireland on an official visit to the Church of Sweden. Lady Eames and Mrs Neill also joined the group. The Church of Sweden is one of the world's largest Lutheran Churches and was a key negotiator of the Porvoo Common Statement which binds the Church of Ireland and the Church of Sweden together. The itinerary provided a variety of opportunities to experience the life of the Church of Sweden in Uppsala.

The visit commenced with early morning Eucharist in Uppsala Cathedral at which the Archbishop of Uppsala, The Most Rev KG Hammar, and the Archbishop of Armagh officiated. The Cathedral occupies a very prominent position in the city, its red brick exterior belying its magnificent interior with stunning stain glass windows, impressive organ and pulpit. We were given a tour of the cathedral by the Dean and one of the cathedral canons and during lunch in the Deanery we learnt more about the life of the cathedral and in particular its outreach programmes.

The Church of Sweden was disestablished at the beginning of 2000. 82% of the population of Sweden are members of the Church. Although 72% of members are baptised and 40% confirmed, retaining young people in the church is a similar problem to that in our own Church.

We had a very interesting morning session in Church House learning, not only about the structures of the church and its day to day operations, but also about how the church has coped in the short time since disestablishment. Their central structure is not dissimilar to our own. The Church of Sweden has a General Synod of 251 people, 110 of whom are women, and each member serves for a four-year term. The Bishops are not members of Synod but they are obliged to be present. The Synod meets twice a year for one week each time. The expenses of members are paid centrally, including a loss of earnings allowance. The cost of the Synod annually is about 50m swedish krone or approximately €500,000.

The Synod elects a 14 person National Church Board which is legally responsible for the Church from a financial point of view and can make proposals to Synod and must fulfil the Synod's wishes. The Church Commissioners are responsible for investments and the pooling of resources of the Church. Ministry and Mission have their own organisations.

The Church of Sweden appears to have coped well with the initial phase of disestablishment. However it became evident while we were there that the Church was beginning to have to grapple with the possibility of severe budgetary constraints as a result of decreased giving and lower than expected return on investments.

The Group had a very interesting visit to the University in Uppsala a large prestigious institution which boasts a number of Nobel prize winners amongst its graduates and professors. The university also has a large Erasmus programme which sees a large

number of students from EU countries attending for a term – many Irish students have benefited from this arrangement. The Peter Fjellstad Foundation, which we also visited, plays a role in clerical education. This private institution is the location of a variety of training programmes for clergy given by the Rev Dr Per Hansson, its Director, and relevant specialists. The institution comes complete with en suite accommodation and a very central location overlooking the river creating the right environment for education and reflection. The Foundation's building is also used for clergy conferences and by clergy on sabbaticals.

In order to get a feeling for parochial life in Uppsala the Group visited a parish situated in a resident area of Uppsala. Their very impressive church building included a well-equipped crèche, meeting/training room and restaurant facility. The crèche, which is free to users, is open to all. The children are introduced to a little of church life during a 30 minute singing session each day which takes place in the church itself. The centre is run by three full time employees – one deacon and 2 social workers/child care experts paid by the State.

Participation in some musical or choir activity is a very popular activity in Sweden and most of the Churches have choirs ranging in age from the young right up to adult groups. We attended a rehearsal of a 'mini choir' (children of about age 7) in another parish in the centre of Uppsala. One gets the impression of tremendous dedication from the choir teachers, their parents and the children themselves.

The Archbishop of Uppsala and his wife hosted a reception and dinner at their residence. Guests included some senior staff working in church house, central committee members and the Irish Ambassador to Sweden, Patrick McCabe, and his Polish wife Ewa. The Archbishop of Armagh spoke of the many common issues that the two churches have to address and the expectation that the bond of friendship forged during the visit and through ongoing Porvoo twinnings with Irish Dioceses would continue and develop to each church's mutual benefit.

The Group came away from this visit with a real sense of a Church coming to grips with a new set of circumstances, in terms of its structure and place in society, juxtaposed with its mission to proclaim the Christian message to the population of Sweden from a Lutheran perspective.