

## **Snowy Swedish city warmly welcomes new link with St Albans**

The Diocese of Linköping in Sweden and the Diocese of St Albans have committed to a covenant of partnership to pray for one another, to learn from one another, and to seek to discern together the loving purposes of God for the two dioceses. The covenant was signed by representatives of both Dioceses in a service at Linköping Cathedral on Sunday 21 January and will be signed again at St Albans Cathedral in February.

Speaking about the St Albans Diocesan visit to Linköping the Rt Revd Christopher Herbert, Bishop of St Albans, said, "It was an absolutely magical occasion. The cathedral was covered in a sprinkling of snow and the welcome was very warm. The signing of our covenant and the ordination of a young woman deacon during the service tangibly brought us closer together."

Bishop Martin Lind, Bishop of Linköping, said, "We have now established an official link between our two dioceses. That is an outer and inner sign of a common mission in and for the world. The signing of the covenant expresses the fact that we are one universal Church in Christ."

Representatives from Linköping including Bishop Lind will visit St Albans Diocese on the weekend of the 10 and 11 February and the reciprocal signing of the covenant will take place at the Cathedral on Sunday during a service beginning at 11.15 am.

The link is in the spirit of the Porvoo Communion, an agreement signed in 1992 which allows Anglican Clergy in Britain and Ireland to share ministry with Clergy in the Nordic and Baltic Churches, including the Church of Sweden.

The covenant has been entered into for a period of five years with an agreement to review together the shared experience of partnership in the course of the final year of the commitment.

**Ends**

## **Notes for editors:**

### **St Albans**

The Diocese of St Albans is the Church of England in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Luton and part of Barnet. It covers an area with a population of approximately 1.6 million people.

## **Linköping**

Centred around the city that bears its name the Diocese of Linköping has 212 parishes with a total of 443 000 members. The Diocese covers a mixture of urban and rural communities.

The City of Linköping, which celebrated its 700th anniversary in 1987, lies in the Southern part of Sweden and is best known today as a university city and centre for the Swedish IT industry. It is the fifth largest city in Sweden with a population of 136,000

## **Covenant Commitments**

Within the covenant relationship the two Dioceses have committed themselves:

- To pray for one another day by day.
- To grow to know one another and be known by one another as they seek to build friendships, to share news and information, and to spend time together.
- To worship together, to celebrate together, and to make pilgrimages together to places which inspire and strengthen their common faith.
- To learn and study together. To share resources and experience as they seek to deepen their understanding of God's will and purpose for his Church in both nations.
- To work together, and to share in the ministry of the Church of God in both dioceses in whatever ways will best witness to the Gospel of Christ and serve the needs of their neighbours and God's world.

## **About the Church of Sweden**

- Sweden has a population of approx 9 million and more than 80% are members of the Church of Sweden.
- 70% of Swedes are baptised, 50% confirmed, 50% married in church and 90% funeral in a Church of Sweden church.
- The Church of Sweden describes itself as an Evangelical Lutheran community of faith manifested in parishes and diocese. An open national church, which, working with a democratic organisation and through the ministry of the church, covers the whole nation.
- Members of the Church of Sweden pay a church fee. This finances 80% of church activities. 40% goes to parish activities

- There are 13 Dioceses (*stift*), each led by a bishop. A diocese is divided into 'contacts' (*kontrakt*), which are then divided into parishes (*forsamlingar*). One or several parishes together may form a larger parish (*pastorat*)
- The head of the Church of Sweden is the Archbishop of Uppsala.
- Anglicanism and the Church of Sweden are very close in character, particularly since the influence of the Oxford Movement.
- The most cherished national saints are Saint Brigitta and King Eric the Saint. Also Saint Botvid and St Eskil in Sudermannia