

## Anglican-Lutheran Society

**Annual General Meeting, 8th March 2014, at Gustaf Adolf Church, Liverpool**

### **Roger Metcalfe : Liverpool International Nordic Community (LiNC)**

LiNC was set up in July 2004, with a Board of Trustees having a wide range of business, teaching and work experience covering many aspects of business activity and daily life. The original objective was to help the Swedish Vicars provided by the Svenska Kyrka Utomlands (SKUT) to run the building and activities of the Gustaf Adolf Church.

To become a Charity in UK law, the original objects were defined as i) to advance the Christian Religion amongst Scandinavian people living or visiting the North West of England and North Wales, and ii) the advancement of education by the teaching of Scandinavian languages and culture.

Initially there was a lack of understanding from SKUT and our priests about what the charity could achieve. The Vicars were in control of all the funds of the church, which included a high level of funding from SKUT in Sweden. It was not until June 2005 that the first LiNC driven development came with the installation of a proper fire and emergency lighting system, which was funded by SKUT after significant representation from LiNC.

LiNC was aware that there were some potentially significant defects in the structure of the building, both internally and externally. So in 2005 we entered discussions with English Heritage and an Architect with historical buildings accreditation to discuss what we could do to start the process of building renovation. We commissioned a full building survey and received an extensive report. We then completed a full application for some £250,000 from the English Heritage church grants organisation, requesting funds for the building restoration work. This application was, unfortunately, turned down on the grounds that the Church was fully functioning and that we were less in need of funds than other churches in worse state of repair.

Thus, during these first three years, LiNC was in effect still trying to find its feet in the relationship with the Vicars and SKUT whilst at the same time following our original business plan by supporting activities by our presence and participation and funding of:-

National Days	Language School	Music Evenings
Bazaar/	Coffee Morning	Book Club
Creation of Web Site	Cinema Club	Art Exhibitions
Ladies Linea Evenings	Craft Classes	Swedish Midsummer
Outreach education to local schools	Outreach to the local community	

However, while LiNC was trying to do as much as it could to raise the profile of the Gustaf Adolf Church and all the activities that were taking place in the building, by the end of 2007 we were still struggling to establish a fully understood and stable relationship with SKUT so that LiNC could work for the benefit of the Gustaf Adolf Congregation and its supporters.

Our suggestion was that LiNC might run the building and activities in the church while SKUT might simply provide the Vicar who could live in the building. But in February 2008, SKUT informed us that they intended to close the building in December 2008 and sell it to developers. LiNC and the Church Council had to tell the SKUT representatives, on the night of their announcement, that they would not be able to sell the building because, in the terms of the 1883 Trust Indenture agreement with the Liverpool City Council, if the building ever ceased to be a church then the building would revert to Liverpool City ownership. At first SKUT chose to disregard our warning and proceeded to continue with their plans for closure.

LiNC then started a major campaign to prevent the attempted closure. We were very lucky to engage the help of a solicitor, on a pro-bono basis to help us with our campaign. We sent letters of complaint to various bodies of the Swedish Church Organisation. We had articles in the local press and on television and the radio. We wrote to many well known figures in the North West and in Sweden, we also wrote to the Scandinavian Embassies. We received many letters of support from all the people and organisations with whom we had communicated. However none of this support could sway SKUT away from their intended closure, and the vicar left the church as they had planned in December 2008.

The LiNC Charity Board of Trustees immediately formed a Joint Committee with those members of the Church Council who were not LiNC Trustees. This Joint Committee took control of the running of the building, the finances, and the organisation of all activities including regular church services. In this way many of the financial income and expenditure activities of the Church became LiNC activities. Thus, in effect, the continued difference of opinion regarding closure with SKUT served to enable us to start running all the business and religious aspects of the church activities. Ironically, this was exactly the option we had been offering SKUT before the closure announcement.

SKUT eventually accepted that they could not sell the church and handed control over to LiNC on 25 October 2010. The signing over meeting took place in the Ulrika Elenora Church in London a mere two years and eight months after the original announcement of closure.

In 1995, when the tenement building next door to the church was demolished, the Merseyside Development Corporation offered the land to the church as a car park. The offer was accepted by the church. Unfortunately the car park was registered to the Swedish Church Foundation. This meant that SKUT owned the car park. The Gustaf Adolf Church needed the car park to maintain our activities, so LiNC had to purchase the car park from SKUT for a price of £97,500.

LiNC has completed a significant list of improvements in the church building over the last 4 years: an Asbestos Survey and Removal, a new boiler, an Electrical Survey and Improvements, Fire Survey and the building of a Fire Corridor and fireproofing of several doors, United Utilities flood basement, and the redecoration and new flooring of the three floors of the front stairwell.

We have further smaller development plans set out for this year, mainly refurbishment and up grading of internal parts of the building. But of course there are major projects for the future: the installation of a lift, major building restoration work in church, repairs to brickwork and masonry on external walls, restoration of leaded light windows in the church

This will be complicated, will require Listed Building planning consent, and will be very expensive so LiNC will be undertaking significant searching for grants and sponsorship deals with businesses in this country and abroad.

LiNC has a policy to maintain absolute control over finances by operating a strict Budget Monitoring and Control policy. There is a sub-committee of three Board members who monitor expenditure and highlight any potential areas of income shortcomings and over-expenditure risk. The committee also sets the proposed budget for the following year and submits this budget to the board for approval. We try to maintain cash assets at a level of one year's expenditure. This is because the building is old and if there was a significant problem in the building, such that we could not carry out normal activities, the income stream could be cut off whilst repairs are carried out, and then normal activities could be resumed. We would prefer to carry a sufficient cash surplus so that we can keep in business without recourse to loans.

We consider that the LiNC company has been a major success in keeping the Gustaf Adolf Nordic Church in full operation with religious, social and cultural events available to both the Nordic and local communities.