

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**Tuesday 10th March 2020  
For immediate use**

### **Retford's fifth annual Freedom & Tolerance Forum - a great success**

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2020, at The Well in Retford, Bassetlaw Christian Heritage (BCH) presented a group of nationally-recognised speakers to an audience from in and around Bassetlaw, including Bassetlaw MP Brendan Clarke-Smith, and Bassetlaw District Council Chairman, Debbie Merryweather.

Freedom and Tolerance is as important today as it was 400 years ago when local Separatist, Thomas Helwys, first advocated tolerance between people of all faiths and those of none. In the anniversary year of the Mayflower Pilgrims, our heritage can still teach us much about journeys, rebellion, and the freedoms we take for granted.

Bassetlaw MP, Brendan Clarke-Smith, opened the event giving thanks to the organisers and expressing a personal interest in the subjects being discussed.

Lord Beith spoke about Methodist heritage and its significance today. He referred to the heritage of one of the three elements that make up the Methodist church, the United Methodists, who were the most independent-minded and authority-challenging of Methodists, relating this to the significance of religious freedom and toleration.

Revd Dr Stuart Jennings who is a specialist in Nottinghamshire history at Warwick University and is an academic advisor to the National Civil War centre at Newark, spoke about faith and fighting in Nottinghamshire during the Civil War. Stuart explained the role of political, religious and human geography in the positioning of Nottinghamshire during the civil war and particularly the contribution of the Thornagh family from Retford.

John Pontifex, who is Head of Press & Information for Aid to the Church in Need (UK), asked whether religious freedom has become an orphaned right. He gave moving, individual descriptions of the suffering of persecuted communities around the world today. John has travelled widely in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, investigated human rights violations relating to Christians and other faith minorities, and has interviewed survivors.

Local author and historian, Adrian Gray, was interviewed by Retford-based publisher, Angela Meads, of Bookworm. Adrian launched his new book, *Restless Souls, Pilgrim Roots*, an epic history of the people of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, showing how their peoples interconnected and spread ideas from the early 7<sup>th</sup> Century until 1660. Adrian went on to give an engaging and informative talk on an unfolding story of intriguing characters during periods of spiritual change, rebellion and death, emphasising the significant impact that local people have made.



## **Bassetlaw Christian Heritage (BCH)**

Focuses on the people and their stories based on faith heritage, with their roots established in and around Bassetlaw, North Nottinghamshire. The region covered is centred on Retford, with a radius of around 30 miles, including parts of Lincolnshire and South Yorkshire.

BCH is keen to work collaboratively with groups and individuals, and if anyone would like to help in any way, they can reach BCH at [contact@bassetlawchristianheritage.com](mailto:contact@bassetlawchristianheritage.com) . Website at: [www.bassetlawchristianheritage.com](http://www.bassetlawchristianheritage.com)

### **Note to Editors**

Photograph attached of:

Brendan Clarke-Smith MP

Cllr Helen Richards

Cllr Debbie Merryweather (Chairman of Bassetlaw District Council)

Lord Beith

Revd Dr Stuart Jennings

Adrian Gray

John Pontifex

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