

# MONMOUTHSHIRE 40p Wednesday, June 20, 2012 Free Press

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## Thought for the weak



with the Rev Preben Andersen

THE lady regarded the tramp severely: "Have you ever been offered work?" she asked. "Only once, ma'am," he replied, "but apart from that, people have shown me nothing but kindness!"

Joking apart, and it really is no joke, I feel genuinely sorry for those many who want to work but cannot seem to get any full-time jobs.

I often ask myself what the Church can offer the unemployed other than prayerful support, and I really do hope that once the Churches Together Café in Caldicot is up and running, there may be space to talk to the volunteers and specialists working there, and opportunities for people to be referred as well to others who can help.

My first years of ministry were in North Devon, and I lost count of the times I heard a farmer say to me: "It's right here, deep in the field, that I can feel God's presence nearest to me. My field is my cathedral, and not only on a Sunday."

The Methodist Church was 1) born in song and 2) steeped in open-air witness and preaching. While we still sing the good old Wesley hymns as lustily as ever in our churches, the open-air witness is much more infrequent now, and what a shame. Because what better way to make known and share the love of God with all than in the outdoors, as we did in the precinct through Churches Together in Holy Week?

See and be seen, hear and be heard, surely this is what effective ministry is about, and a great way to engage with people where they find themselves. I want to focus more on this and encourage others to do the same.

If you agree, why not come and talk to us in our churches and hopefully find we are a dedicated bunch of people with a heart for those in our communities who struggle.

We want to walk alongside you, not in an interfering kind of way, but listening and acting as we are guided. Are you, and are we, up for it?