



**A chance to watch films together.  
An opportunity to discuss the issues raised.  
A time of friendship, food and fun.**

<b>4th Sep</b>	<b>Lemon Tree</b>
<b>2nd Oct</b>	<b>Freedom Writers</b>
<b>6th Nov</b>	<b>Sophie Scholl</b>
<b>4th Dec</b>	<b><u>Nativity!</u></b>
<b>8th Jan</b>	<b>The Assignment Bureau</b>
<b>4th Feb</b>	<b>Grace is Gone</b>

**Films start at 5:30pm  
Followed by food, coffee and conversation**

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## Some thoughts on watching films

Stories are the stuff of life. They allow us to reflect on all sorts of issues at a safe distance as we engage with the characters, cry with them, laugh with them, get cross with them and generally share their experience. How they deal with the issues they come across may frustrate us, or give us new insights; cause us to laugh or cry; result in us hurling abuse at the screen or willing there to be a happy ending. And through it all we can encounter God in all sorts of unexpected places if only we take time to look.

### Questions to ask yourself

- ▶ What did you think of the film? What do you like most? Least?
- ▶ Which incidents made you think or feel most strongly? How well did you think the film treated those incidents?
- ▶ What issues did the film raise for you?
- ▶ What character(s) do you most identify with and why?
- ▶ Does the film have any echoes of Christian beliefs or stories from the Bible? Does it support or challenge Christian values?

### Some facts about the film

- ▶ The film was directed by Debbie Isitt, a director who specialises in improvisation. Although there was an outline of the story (notably a beginning and an end), much of the script was improvised by the actors.
- ▶ Isitt's previous film *Confetti* (about a wedding) was entirely improvised. When they started, no one knew how the film was going to end, not even the director.
- ▶ The film is set in Debbie Isitt's home town of Coventry.
- ▶ Over 100 hours of film were produced which then had to be cut down to an hour and three quarters.
- ▶ Martin Freeman initially came to prominence through the film *Love Actually*, another heart-warming Christmas tale.
- ▶ Marc Wootton (Mr Poppy) and Pam Ferris (Mrs Bevan) have already been signed up for Debbie Isitt's next project *Nativity 2: The Second Coming*. This sees a new teacher, played by David Tennant, enter his school in the National 'Song for Christmas' Competition. He and his pregnant wife, and the schoolchildren, embark on an epic road trip that ends up with a birth and a donkey, where he must embrace his fears and become a hero. It is due for release in November 2012.

## Memorable Quotes

- Paul We all know there is such a thing as a little white lie and there's a black Protestant lie, which is more serious.
- Priest I don't think so. A lie is a lie is a lie.
- Paul Technically?
- Priest What do you mean, technically?
- Paul You know, "Was that a nice meal?", "Oh yes, it was lovely!", even though you're feeling sick because you don't want to hurt her feelings.
- Priest It's still a lie, isn't it? And if you picked the woman up on her bad cooking, the next time you might get a decent meal.
- Mr Poppy You loved her. She loved you. It went wrong.
- Mr Poppy I can see a man who is really scared and frightened and angry.
- Paul I'm frightened of you, because I've never met one of you before. I'm terrified because I don't know what you or I are going to do.
- Mr Poppy I could help you mend your heart, Mr Maddens.
- Paul These children will never be able to do that.
- Mr Poppy Yes, they will.
- Child Everyone knows we're useless.
- Paul You're not useless.
- Child That's what Mr Maddens calls us.
- Paul No, I don't.
- Child Yes, you do. You told Mrs Bevan that we are.
- Mr Poppy Do you know what happens at the end of the Nativity? Baby Jesus is born. Right, who fancies going on a little field trip to actually see a real baby being born?
- Mr Poppy How are they supposed to give convincing performances if they've never seen a baby being born?
- Paul It's called pretending. It's what every child in every nativity does every year.
- Mr Poppy You can't pretend something unless you've experience it.
- Paul I'm pretending to like you and I've yet to experience that.
- Mr Poppy I can give you a cuddle. Cuddles make it all go away.
- Mrs Bevan Nobody ever expects enough of the children at St Bernadette's. Everyone expects them to go down the drain. And I'm going to change that. That's what I said 17 years ago and tonight it stands a chance of coming true ... All I know is each and every one of these children is amazing and wonderful and a little pocket of stardust.

# Nativity!

One Christmas, primary school teacher Paul Maddens is charged with producing the school's nativity play. Competing against the posh rival school for the honour of best reviewed show in town, the stakes are raised when Paul idly boasts that his ex-girlfriend Jennifer, a Hollywood Producer, is coming to see his show with a view to turning it into a film. The only trouble is, they haven't spoken in years. With eccentric assistant Mr Poppy fuelling his "little white lie", Paul suddenly finds himself a local celebrity and at the centre of quarrelling parents and over-excited children desperate in their bid for fame and fortune. Paul's only hope is to get back in touch with Jennifer and lure Hollywood to town so that everybody's Christmas wishes can come true.

## Little white lies

The truth is an occasional victim throughout the story (it is not only Paul who embellishes things). We all know how easy it is to bend the truth a little, to elaborate things so as to put them in a better light, or not give an honest answer so as to avoid hurt or conflict. And the results can make things even more difficult. It can result in us having to spin an ever-increasing complex web of half-truths, or end up with our opinion never being trusted, even on those occasions when we may be telling the truth. So why do we keep doing it?

## There is nothing like experience

Mr Poppy is very keen that the children have experience of the things they will be asked to portray in the play. As he says: "you can't pretend something unless you've experienced it." That message, of course, is at the heart of the Christmas story as God comes to earth to experience what it is like to be human. But what extra element do you think experience brings? Many actors do portray things they haven't experienced. Is it possible to fake experience?

## Having faith in people

Mr Poppy has no prior teaching experience but he does have a natural flair with the children, something that comes from ultimately believing in them and having faith in their abilities, a gift that Mr Maddens has lost. We all thrive so much better when we are encouraged but all too often we lack confidence both in others and ourselves, so much so that we (as individuals or as a community) don't even try to aim for things that, together, are within our grasp. What can you do to encourage and affirm those around you?

## Retelling the story

Thousands of children around the country will be involved in Christmas plays in the coming weeks. Some of them will be very traditional nativity plays. Some will not. Sadly, some of them will only vaguely refer to the true meaning of Christmas, if at all. What should we be doing to enable the story of Christmas to be told in ways that people can connect with, without losing the message that lies at the heart of the Christmas story?

## Love came down

In the end, love really does come down and transform those involved in the story. A new found confidence takes root, people can once more feel good about themselves, previous hurts are forgiven, relationships are restored and Christmas wishes come true. As we approach Christmas for another year, what do you hope for? And how can the love which is at the heart of the nativity story transform your life and that of our community this Christmas?