



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

<b>1st Sep</b>	<b>Les Misérables</b>
<b>6th Oct</b>	<b>The Hunt</b>
<b>3rd Nov</b>	<b>Fambul Tok</b>
<b>8th Dec</b>	<b>As it is in heaven</b>
<b>5th Jan</b>	<b><u>The Angels' Share</u></b>
<b>2nd Feb</b>	<b>Stuart - A Life Backwards</b>

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

**10 Bletchington Road  
Islip**

**Further details from Jonathan (Ox 842214)  
Email: [info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk](mailto:info@spiritualityonscreen.org.uk)  
Web: [www.spiritualityonscreen.org.uk](http://www.spiritualityonscreen.org.uk)**

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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 title comes from "angels' share", a term for the portion (share) of a whisky's volume that is lost to evaporation during ageing in oak barrels.
- ▶ The film competed for the *Palme d'Or* at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival and Ken Loach won the Jury Prize.
- ▶ The film has sometimes been called the Scottish answer to *The Full Monty*.
- ▶ Ken Loach is well known for directing independent films and using non-professional actors in the leading roles. All four rogues in *The Angels' Share* are played by non-professionals, some of whom have had similar social backgrounds to the characters they portray.
- ▶ Ken Loach's other films include *Kes* (1969), *Sweet Sixteen* (2002) and *Looking for Eric* (2009).
- ▶ All Loach's films have an element of social realism and are all shot on location.

## **Extract from an interview with *The Guardian* on the occasion of the film's premiere at Cannes**

Paul Brannigan differs from your usual Cannes ingenue in both his talent and the depth of real-life experience, which Loach says helped secure him the role. Both his parents are drug addicts. "It was tough growing up, and there were moments where I just wanted to crawl away and die. I slashed my wrist with a mirror after a fight with my dad. But it's not a sob story. I'm quite sensible; I don't get myself too close or let my emotions go. You can get hurt and then you feel your life is destroyed."

His own dabbles with drugs – cocaine, he says, plus acid and valium – were not simply recreational. "In Glasgow, there's no work. There's no shops or houses getting built. No chance, no opportunities, no hope. And when you've no hope you can't get your motivation up, your self-confidence goes down and you turn to drink and drugs. It's a downwards spiral."

Expelled from school at 14, Brannigan was sent to prison at 16 for nearly four years after joining his uncle in a gun battle. He's still sore about the circumstances: "I've been involved in assaults and feuds, I've been slashed and stabbed and shot at, but that situation was something that could have been resolved differently had the police got involved after my auntie got stabbed in the head with a bottle."

In jail, he taught himself to read via a diet of dictionaries and Newsnight. "I didn't watch it for the politics; I'd listen to the way they speak, then find out what the fancy words mean, then put sentences together and learn to become articulate. I've always been small, and being small in Glasgow doesn't really get you a lot of places unless you're aggressive. So I learnt to try and use my mouth."

On release he was full of good intentions, but still "a bit of a lad, doing daft things". The scar on his face was the result of a fight with his brother. He lost a job at a community centre. But just as his character in the film, Robbie, calms down after the birth of his first child, likewise Brannigan re-prioritised after his son, Leon, was born three-and-a-half years ago.

He was spotted by scriptwriter Paul Laverty at the Strathclyde police's Violence Reduction Unit, where he teaches four hours of football a week (currently his only paid employment). But he was sceptical initially, skipped auditions, and it was only the pressure of repaying a Christmas loan that meant he finally responded to Laverty's rallying phonecalls. "It probably saved my life, to be honest. I'd nowhere to turn, got a kid; who knows what I'd have done for money."

For Brannigan, the lucky break felt half like karma, half hard work. "Kids can't just wake up and go: I want a job. I worked hard for this. And it made me realise to myself I was important as a human being. I've got a point."

He'd like to pursue acting, he says, but, equally, he wants to continue with the football coaching and voluntary mentoring. "When you see the change in some of these kids, after eight weeks coming in and dressing smart, there's no better feeling than that."

# The Angels' Share

This bitter sweet comedy follows protagonist Robbie as he sneaks into the maternity hospital to visit his young girlfriend Leonie and hold his newborn son Luke for the first time. Overwhelmed by the moment, he swears that Luke will not have the same tragic life he has had. Escaping a prison sentence by the skin of his teeth, he's given one last chance. While serving a community service order, he meets Rhino, Albert and Mo who, like him, find it impossible to find work because of their criminal records. Little did Robbie imagine how turning to drink might change their lives - not cheap fortified wine, but the best malt whiskies in the world. Will it be 'slopping out' for the next twenty years, or a new future with 'Uisge Beatha' the 'Water of Life?' Only the angels know ...

## No angels

Despite the title, the main characters are no angels. All have seen something of the rough edges of life. Nor are their plans to go straight totally above board. Yet we are encouraged by the way the film is made to feel sympathy for them and to cheer them on their way. Jesus himself is not averse to applauding some shady characters - just think of the parable of the dishonest steward (Luke 16: 1 - 13). Is it ever right to secure the opportunity of a new life by dishonest means? How can we give hope to those who find themselves stuck in downward spirals of behaviour and help them find a way out?

## Rejection by society

The group very much has a feeling of "us" and "them", "them" being the anonymous system. Time and again they are talked down to by those in authority and never given a chance to speak for themselves. The result is a sense of alienation and a move to live by their own rules - one in which their whisky caper would seem perfectly alright. If you had met Robbie and his friends in the street, how would you have reacted to them and their behaviour? Director Ken Loach, when talking about the film, has highlighted the way the film slowly challenges the audience's perceptions of how we treat people in the lower echelons of society. "This is just a little story so that people might see people like Robbie in a different light after watching the film." What has the film taught you?

## Controlling our feelings

At one point, after he has assaulted another gang member, Robbie says to Harry: "I can feel it in my bones ... I am scared that the next time I won't be able to stop. I was this close to taking someone's eye out, I scared myself Harry." Why do you think Robbie struggles to control his emotional reactions? How can we control our emotions in difficult situations?

## A Christ-like figure?

Harry is the one character who has compassion for the group. His integrity and honesty gain him respect in his job, while his listening ear and caring nature is greatly welcomed by the group. He uses his own time, money and resources to help them - and he expects nothing in return. He simply loves them and looks out for them, while gently challenging them to live law-abiding lives. Are their people you know who are like Harry? How well would you have done if you had been in Harry's shoes?

## The coming of a child

This is just one of many films in which the coming of a baby proves to be a pivotal moment in someone's life (eg. think of *Tsotsi*). The vulnerability of a baby touches us in a way nothing else can, even more so when that baby is ours. And for Robbie, his determination to make a new life for himself and Leonie is triggered by the arrival of their baby. As such, it is an ideal Christmas movie as we once again reflect on the influence on all of us that the baby Jesus had, and continues to have. How will you respond to that vulnerable baby, lying in a manger, this year?