

## FILM



Tanner Mcguire as Tyler Doherty and Jeffrey Johnson as Brady McDaniels in *Letters to God*

# Letters (ink on paper)

**Letters to God** (2010, PG)

Tyler Doherty is a young boy with cancer who writes letters to God. They are collected by the USA postal service that has different ways of 'delivering' this mail. After the regular postman who has looked after these letters for quite a while takes longer leave, the new postman, struggling alcoholic Brady McDaniels takes up Tyler's route. Brady finds his own life and relationships challenged by Tyler's faith. Other key characters are Tyler's Mum, her son, and her own mother.

This is a simple story about ordinary people struggling with their ordinary lives when a child's critical illness has them re-evaluate what is important in relationships and the place of faith. The tagline is 'Hope is contagious', and this film is about giving hope when it is very hard and even seems impossible. The film is also about one's life being a letter (the end-quote is from 2 Corinthians 3:3):

*You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (NIV)*

It shows how seemingly ordinary lives have an impact on others in ways they would never have thought.

The co-director Patrick Doughtie has personal experience of the theme of the film, and penned the story. The other director David Nixon is well-known for his production work in

Christian films including *Fireproof*.

There are some stereotyped roles, including the pastor, though perhaps we all know pastors like this one? I still thought it was worth seeing, but

**This film is about giving hope when it is very hard and even seems impossible.**

I note it is a longish film if you were thinking of showing at an event (and at times it feels longer). A good edit of 30 minutes would make it a tighter and more coherent film and I believe more accessible to a wider audience.

There is a website with information about obtaining the movie for viewing, and also now an app. According to the website over 255 000 letters have been received via the app, with a revolving globe mapping out the public letters of prayer and displaying the latest ones. See: <http://www.letterstogodthemovie.com/>

**The Letter Writer** (2011, PG)

How long has it been since you received a postal letter? This film revolves around the endangered species known as the personal handwritten letter. In an age when short bursts dominate our increasingly social-media-oriented world, this film provides

a 'time out' for reflection and consideration.

Aley Underwood plays Maggie Fuller, a generally good, but pretty normal teenager and aspiring singer raised by her single-parent mother who has her own struggles. Maggie is trying to find a purpose in her life as she considers the world of music, her relationships, health issues, ageing, and many simply normal events. She is an unusual heroine, but certainly fits the role as she seeks to help others.

Bernie Diamond is 'The Letter Writer' Sam, an elderly man who sends letters of encouragement and affirmation by post choosing names from the telephone book. He also hand delivers letters to people he meets in his day-to-day walks or visits.

After receiving a letter, Maggie is so intrigued she tracks Bernie down and begins a journey of friendship and contact with others she would never have known unless someone had taken the opportunity to encourage her (and the way this comes about is taken as God-provided).

There are some poignant elements to this film, and certainly those involved with Kairos and Emmaus will know the power of receiving an actual letter and words of encouragement, as opposed to hearing words of abuse or degradation.

In their initial exchange upon meeting, Sam asks Maggie:

Sam Worthington: Didn't you like your letter?

Maggie Fuller: Yeah, but you don't even know me.

Sam Worthington: If I'm the one person that has something nice to say about you, I know you better than anyone else.

A central theme to the story is 'finding your role in life'. What are you meant to do on this earth? Sam puts it this way "Within every human being there is a God given ability that if you find it and nurture it you'll be able to bless the lives of others."

This is a gentle and intriguing film. I believe that it could be a film that will resonate with grandparents and parents – perhaps a good one for grandparents and grandchildren (not too young) to even view together?

*Peter Bentley is the ACC's National Executive Consultant*