



# Movies With Spirit

*Sponsored by the Ulster County Religious Council, Kingston Area Council of Churches,  
Ministers' Alliance of Ulster County and Mid-Hudson Islamic Association*

46 Hunter Street, #1, Kingston NY 12401 • gerry.harrington@humanitysteam.org • 845-331-7168

## 2007–2008 Calendar

**Sept. 15, CRAZY LIKE A FOX (2004), First Presbyterian Church of Kingston, 80 Elmendorf St.** — Nat Banks (Roger Rees), an eighth-generation Virginian gentleman farmer living in the past, loses his family farm to a pair of land speculators from Washington. When the predatory couple manipulates a real estate transaction that turns into a hostile possession of the farm's manor house, Nat temporarily loses his mind, leaving his family but not the farm. Instead, he hides out in a cave, waging guerilla warfare against expansionism and the destruction of historic property with the help of his family, friends and neighbors. This touching film explores the loss of culture and heritage to changing times and how a community can make a difference. *Rated PG-13 for brief strong language.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. Ralph Merante, who is also a member of the Kingston Area Council of Churches.

**Oct. 20, SMOKE SIGNALS (1998), St. John's Episcopal Church, 207 Albany Ave.** — Victor Joseph (Adam Beach) and Thomas Builds-the-Fire (Evan Adams) — Native American neighbors growing up on the Coeur D'Alene Indian Reservation in Plummer, Idaho — embark on a journey to retrieve the ashes of Victor's father, Arnold ([Gary Farmer](#)), who died in Arizona. The trip turns out to be a soul-searching endeavor for both men. This is the first motion picture made with an exclusively Native American creative team. *Rated PG-13 for some intense images.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. Duncan Burns.

**Nov. 17, AS GOOD AS IT GETS (1997), St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 163 Main St., New Paltz** — Obsessive-compulsive, cantankerous, and homophobic writer Melvin Udall (Jack Nicholson), who lives in a world that has shrunk to about the size of his apartment and the books he writes, finds his life turned upside-down when neighboring gay artist Simon Bishop (Greg Kinnear), hospitalized after a brutal beating, entrusts his dog to Melvin. In addition, Carol Connelly (Helen Hunt), the only waitress who will tolerate him, must leave work to care for her sick son, making it impossible for Melvin to eat breakfast. *Rated PG-13 for strong language, thematic elements, nudity and a beating.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. Gwyneth MacKenzie Murphy.

**Dec. 15, BELIEVE IN ME (2006), Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church, 122 Clinton Ave., Kingston** — A fact-based tale about a 1960s-era girls basketball coach in a tiny, backwater Oklahoma town who inspires his athletes to believe in themselves and always strive to reach their greatest potential. Coach Clayton Driscoll (Jeffrey Donovan) gives the girls — a sports laughingstock — permission to become as passionate about the game as any boy would be — running against a cultural tide in which girls' athletics could barely qualify as an afterthought to sports fans. Not only do the girls rally their spirit in an unheard-of attempt to take the state championship, but Clayton finds himself emancipated by his love for the team and heals a wound in his marriage. *Rated PG for some mild thematic elements and language.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. Darlene Kelley.

**Jan. 19 — ILLUSION (2006), Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Catskills, 320 Sawkill Road, Kingston** — Once-powerful but now ailing movie director Donald Baines (Kirk Douglas, in his final film) nears the end of his life. As he awaits death, he slips into a “dream” and is shown three “snippets” of the movie of the life of his illegitimate son, Christopher (Michael A. Goorjian), whom he rejected and saw only once 30 years ago. He watches his rebel-romantic son's growth from mid-teens to mid-30s as he pursues his lifelong love, Isabelle (Karen Tucker). The two constants through these snippets are his son's unfulfilled quest for Isabelle and the imagined voice of the young man's director-father telling him he is not worthy and not wanted. It is only when the story reaches its conclusion that the old man discovers a surprising truth about his son and himself. *Rated PG-13 for some violence.* Discussion facilitated by congregation lay leader David Rolfe and series organizer Gerry Harrington.

**Feb. 16, BEE SEASON (2005), Woodstock Jewish Congregation, 1682 Glasco Turnpike, Woodstock** — Eliza Naumann (Flora Cross), age 11, comes from a family in which everyone diverts their emotional frustrations into secret channels. When Eliza unexpectedly begins winning spelling bees, what had been a stable dynamic within the family becomes disrupted. Long-held secrets emerge. And a latent spiritual yearning is awakened in her withdrawn father Saul (Richard Gere) and compulsive mother Miriam (Juliette Binoche). As Eliza moves closer and closer to the national spelling bee, the Naumann family finds itself in a spiral of surprising discovery and jarring uncertainty. *Rated PG-13 for thematic elements, a scene of sensuality and brief strong language.* Discussion facilitated by Rabbi Miriam Margles.

**March 15, PEACEFUL WARRIOR (2006), Community Church of High Falls, corner of Mohonk and Firehouse roads, one block from state Route 213, High Falls** — Based on a memoir, this is a story of an arrogant, driven college gymnast named Dan Millman (Scott Mechlowicz) who suffers a serious injury preventing him from continuing his heartless pursuit of gymnastic victory. He achieves new strength and understanding, however, through his meeting with a mysterious, elderly stranger named Socrates (Nick Nolte), an attendant at an all-night gas station. Millman learns to value strength in spirit over strength in body and discovers that he can create a new and profoundly more rewarding purpose in his life through the life and practice of the “peaceful warrior.” Also starring Amy Smart as an elusive woman in Millman's life. *Rated PG-13 for sensuality, sex references and accident scenes.* Discussion facilitated by church elder Lorna Schimmrich and series organizer Gerry Harrington.

**April 19, LA VITA È BELLA (LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL) (1997), St. John the Evangelist Parish, 915 Route 212, Saugerties** — In this Academy Award-winning tragicomedy, Italian comic actor Roberto Benigni portrays Guido, who moves during the 1930s from the country to a Tuscan town, where he is entranced by schoolteacher Dora (Nicoletta Braschi, Benigni's real-life wife). Meanwhile, anti-Semitic attitudes lead to attacks against Guido's Jewish uncle (Giustino Durano). Guido and Dora eventually marry and have a son, Giosue (Giorgio Cantarini). During the war, when imprisoned in a concentration camp, Guido goes to elaborate lengths to keep his son from understanding the truth of their unconscionable situation, telling the boy they are competing with others to win an armored tank — so that everything from food shortages to tattoos is explained as necessary for participation in the contest. Italian, with subtitles. *Rated PG-13 for Holocaust-related thematic elements.* Discussion facilitated by Msgr. William Williams.

**May 17, ANTWONE FISHER (2002), New Progressive Baptist Church, 8 Hone St., Kingston** — A moving and harrowing true-life story of a young sailor (Derek Luke) prone to violent outbursts, who reveals a brutal and abusive childhood. Through the guidance of his doctor (Denzel Washington), he confronts his painful past and begins a quest to find the family he never knew. The young man's character is so courageous and his internal compass so powerful, he overcomes every emotional obstacle one could imagine in an early life. *Rated PG-13 for violence, language and mature thematic material involving child abuse.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. G. Modele Clarke, who is also president of the Ministers' Alliance of Ulster County.

**June 21, HOW TO KNOW GOD (2006), Vivekananda Retreat, Ridgely, 101 Leggett Road, Stone Ridge** — A visual adaptation of the ideas in Deepak Chopra's best-selling book of the same title, the film investigates "the soul's journey into the mystery of mysteries." Blending religion, science and philosophy, Chopra's approach is intended to aid any viewer, regardless of faith, who feels inspired to undergo a profound quest "to know God." Critics called the film "thought-provoking," "practical" and "thoroughly entertaining." *Not rated.* Discussion facilitated by Pravrajika Gitaprana, minister in residence.

**July 19, EVAN ALMIGHTY (2007), Reformed Church of Port Ewen, 160 Salem St., Port Ewen** — Evan Baxter (Steve Carell), who was tormented by TV news rival Bruce Nolan (Jim Carrey) in 2003's *Bruce Almighty*, has gone onto bigger and better things, successfully running for Congress on a pledge to change the world. But he never stated how. Once he reaches his new home and job, his life turns upside-down when God (Morgan Freeman) appears and commands him to build an ark because a flood is coming. *Rated PG for mild rude humor and some peril.* Discussion facilitated by the Rev. Jim Beukelman.

**Aug. 16, FREEDOM WRITERS (2007), Temple Emanuel, 243 Albany Ave., Kingston** — Inspired by a true story and the diaries of real Long Beach, Calif., teenagers after the 1992 Los Angeles riots, two-time Academy Award winner Hilary Swank stars as English teacher Erin Gruwell, who gets into a debate with her students about racism and compares a caricature of a black student with big lips drawn by another student to the Nazis' caricatures of Jews with big noses. She then takes her students on a field trip to the Los Angeles Museum of Tolerance to teach them about the Holocaust. Over the course of

their studies, the teens experience hope that they can show the world that their lives matter and that they have something to say. *Rated PG-13 for violent content, some thematic material and language.* Discussion facilitated by Rabbi Yael Romer of the synagogue and Bob Cohen, president of the Ulster County Religious Council.

***Each screening begins at 7 p.m. and is followed by a facilitated discussion. Evenings end around 10 p.m. Attendance is free of charge.*** Attendees are invited to make voluntary contributions to help pay for series expenses. Each hosting place will offer refreshments.

*The series is sponsored by the Ulster County Religious Council, the Kingston Area Council of Churches, the Ministers' Alliance of Ulster County and the Mid-Hudson Islamic Association. It is organized by Gerry Harrington of Humanity's Team, "a civil rights movement for the soul."*

***For more information, contact Gerry Harrington at (845) 331-7168 or [gerry.harrington@humanitysteam.org](mailto:gerry.harrington@humanitysteam.org).***

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