“The World Sings at Christmas” was presented on December 2 by our wonderful Chancel Choir under the direction of Dr. Chris Peterson - superb!
For those of us who work in churches, doing ministry may be a little easier than it is for people whose work carries them into situations and workplaces where they are presented with ethical and spiritual challenges every day. It isn't that the church doesn't present its clergy with the same challenges, but the environment is different—the church is a place where we are hoping to bring our best, and to be in community with people who are all trying to act on what it means to be “Christian.”

The Rev. Barbara Brown Taylor tells of an experience of listening to a man who came to her after church, and dropped a few sentences in passing that remain with her still. He told her about how much he looked forward to coming to church when he could on Sunday. The worship service and the fellowship afterwards sent him elated—here was a place where he could be in the world as it was supposed to be—kindness, forgiveness, love and generosity were being practiced in ways that were palpable.

Taylor relates how, “The feeling stuck with him on his ride home, and well into the night. Monday mornings were good—he woke and prepared for the day feeling uplifted—until he got to work. He said that once he was back among people whose way of dealing with each other on a daily basis was not spiritual or particularly caring, he slipped back from acting on the principles he felt all around him so strongly on Sunday. He couldn't wait for his Sunday ‘fix.’”

This month, we re-set the liturgical calendar with regard to how we will hear the Christian story for another year. This is the time of “watching and waiting” as Advent draws towards Christmas. Then comes bright Epiphany, the wilderness of Lent, and Easter. We will hear once again about the small overtaking the mighty, justice for those without it, swords being beaten into plowshares, and the prodigal son who was loved and forgiven. The story tells us how we have the opportunity to begin again, that we are loved no matter what, and that our very privilege is a call to make ourselves servants to others.

It is a complex story in many ways, and finding a way into it that brings meaning requires finding a spiritual discipline that helps carry the uplift of Sunday through the challenges of the week.

I think that for many of us who are clergy, we forget what a challenge it is for so many members of our congregations to walk out of our doors into situations that are anything but spiritual, and into environments that present challenges on every level.

I also notice that the people I encounter in church who are most grounded are often those who are most dedicated to finding themselves in a community where they are called upon to act on their best understanding of what the church is founded upon—Jesus’ presence and teachings that point to a love of God and loving your neighbor as you would love yourself.

Advent is the season of watching and waiting for this story to unfold once again. I invite you to come and share the meaning of this story throughout the coming year in an active, caring and progressive community. Deepen your spiritual discipline, and let it help you to carry the message with you past Monday morning and all through the week by keeping it alive in your heart.

Join us in our activities this month, including a combined service on December 23, where our kids and youth will take part in a special service where we end Advent and look to Christmas Eve. Our 9:00 Christmas Eve service (for me the most beautiful of the year) will be waiting for you to unwrap and enjoy. We'll be waiting for you!

Faithfully,

Pastor Paul
On November 20, IUCC and University Synagogue celebrated our 30th annual pre-Thanksgiving interfaith service. It was a lovely, warm, and poignant evening that included keynote speaker Dr. Michele Goodwin of UCI as well as guests from the Unified Mosque of Irvine, Iglesia Vida Abundante and Center for Spiritual Living. Our combined choirs were magnificent, and there was a palpable spirit of love, goodwill, and thankfulness all around.

Photos L to R from top left are: Pastor Paul & Rabbi Rachlis; combined choirs; Lesley Wheland & Michael Stone; Renae Boyum & Fritzi Goldberg light the Havdalah Candle; Dr. Goodwin; Rabbi Rachlis, Dr. Goodwin, & Pastor Paul; Scouts from Troop 602; Rabbi Rachlis, Dr. Goodwin, Pastor Paul, and Carl Whidden; and IUCC pianist Josh Chandra and IUCC Director of Music Chris Peterson.

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes
More photos of shared Thanksgiving service

Photos courtesy of Felicity Figueroa & Tricia Aynes
A few Christmas memories ...

I grew up on a farm in Minnesota. It wasn't a big farm - about 160 acres that my Dad grew crops on that fed our 20 or so dairy cattle. It wasn't a big home - six children and two adults in a four bedroom house with one bathroom. The bedrooms were small and the three upstairs ones were quite often cold in the winter. At Christmas time, we would decorate the tree (one that my Dad would find on the farm and cut down) usually a few weeks ahead of Christmas. One of my favorite memories is sitting in front of the tree with its lights and enjoying the ambiance.

When it came to the Christmas celebration, we were “Christmas Eve people.” When we were children, my parents would get all of us in the car and then announce that they had forgotten something and unbeknownst to us that’s when Santa came. We would go to church in a white-framed church with a service of many carols, usually a Christmas program lead by the children, and a bag of Christmas candy handed out at the end of the service. After the 20 minute or so drive to our home, we would run inside and sure enough, Santa had come! The presents were opened in a rush of paper and excitement. After the presents were opened, my Mom would bring in the Christmas cookies from our own freezer - the unheated porch - and young and old would have a glass of Mogen David wine.

On Christmas Day, there were no stockings or presents, but in the afternoon we would go to my Grandma’s home where all of my aunts and uncles and cousins would gather together. There were usually about 50 people crowded into my grandmother’s home. Each of the 35 grandchildren received a present, as did all of the adults. My mom told me that Grandma would start buying these presents in the middle of the summer.

After Keith and I were married and moved to California, we continued the Christmas Eve tradition, and then when our two children arrived on the scene we switched to a Christmas morning arrival of Santa and present opening.

Now that we have grandchildren, we continue that tradition with Christmas morning being a wonderful time of receiving and giving of gifts and a warm and loving family time.

My Christmas memories also revolve around sharing special moments at the IUCC Christmas Eve services. From the lighting of the Christ candle, to the singing of carols, to Pastor Paul's Christmas sermon, to the end of the service with the lighting one by one of the candles and then the chancel darkening and the singing of Silent Night, I am awed by the feelings of faith and community that surround me on this Holy Night. Sharing those moments with my own family and with my IUCC family is indeed a special part of Christmas for me.

As we prepare and reflect on the Christmas season, my wish is that IUCC continue to be a beacon of acceptance and love to all! That is the best present we can give to ourselves and to the community!

In faith and community,

Renae
So many activities – and memories – around the holidays from Thanksgiving to Christmas! I’ll be Nutcracker-ing in early December, something I began when my daughter started ballet lessons.

And our worship and song will sound lots of familiar “bells” in biblical texts, melodies, and traditions. One ancient hymn will be heard at the beginning and end of the Advent season this year: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”

This hymn is based on a very ancient liturgical text in Latin. On each of the seven nights before Christmas, one of the verses was sung, with “O come, O come, Emmanuel” on the final night.

The titles given in the seven verses, in order, are Sapientia (Wisdom), Adonai (Lord), Radix Jesse (Root of Jesse), Clavis David (Key of David), Oriens (dawn or dayspring), Rex Gentium (Ruler of the Nations), and Emmanuel (God with us).

The first letter of each title, in reverse order, spell out ero cras – Latin for “tomorrow I come.”

Adult Sunday School in December will explore ideas inspired by Marcus Borg & John Dominic Crossan’s The First Christmas. There will NOT be class on Dec. 23, since we’ll have only one service, at 10:00, that morning to share the children and youth’s pageant.

Tuesday Bible Study with Ken Wyant continues to trek through the book of Acts, the second volume from “Luke.”

In the new year, look for information about a new pictorial directory, yoga classes, and more!

Many thanks to everyone who helped with our Nov. 18 work day! Special thanks to Teri Houston for organizing, tool gathering, and regular visits to church to “take care of this and that”!

MISSION & SERVICE OPPORTUNITY

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Would you like to make a difference in the life of a child and warm your heart at the same time? IUCC has had a long standing relationship with Families Forward, a wonderful organization that helps local OC families who are homeless or at risk. This year IUCC is honored to host a toy drive to bring some joy to children during the holidays.

Your participation is simple and easy: just bring a few (or more) new, unwrapped toys or gift cards on four Sundays between Nov 18 and Dec 9. Bins will be located outside the narthex. Here is a list of the most requested gift items: https://www.families-forward.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Families-Forward-Holiday-Drive-Teen-Drive-List-2017.pdf

If you are bringing gift cards, please put them in a larger envelope and indicate the amount and store name on the front. Thank you for giving disadvantaged children a Merry Christmas to show them that they are loved!
Our Early Childhood Center Director is a local gal with a deep commitment to early childhood education. Irma Rosales now offers leadership to a very successful Center, and indeed one that is about to expand.

We will soon do the following: meet more community needs through our preschool; demonstrate IUCC values of service and support; and anticipate ever-stronger financial support to the congregation. The woman pictured on the right is at the helm!

Irma was born and raised right here in Orange County. Her birth family included not only Irma, but also two sisters and two brothers. As I sometimes joke to long-married people: Irma’s parents have a relationship that seems likely to succeed. They have been married 54 years!

Her interest in teaching was kindled early. When she was a fifth grader, a remarkable teacher influenced Irma to a teaching career, and when she was a tender sixteen year-old, her volunteer work at a Sunday School reinforced her choice of a vocation.

A member of our preschool staff (teacher, then Director) for more than fourteen years, Irma reports several markers of professional satisfaction. The best part of her job, she says, is seeing the children's smiling faces, and knowing at the end of the day that the children have learned. More programmatically, Director Irma says that she is satisfied in knowing that the school is expanding, and that we will provide more quality child care to the community. And the “place that Irma runs” is a safe and nurturing one. Irma says that a parent once told her that when she dropped off her child at the IUCC Early Childhood Center, she had no worries: her child would be well taken care of.

On a personal note, Irma has been married for 22 years. (With a grin: another relationship that has a chance!) She has two daughters, Julianna and Ashley, and a nine year old granddaughter, Liliana. She lives with her husband in nearby Tustin.

Given all of this, Irma’s motto is wholly expected. It is: *Children are the future!*
Photos from Advent Workshop on December 2

Photos courtesy of Tricia Aynes & Pastor Paul

Congratulations to Pastor Sarah for winning the trophy for Best Chili!
BSA TROOP 602
Irvine, CA

Executing the Aims of the BSA program, which helps ALL youth be “Prepared. For Life.”

Chartered By: Irvine United Congregational Church
Chartered Organization Rep: Matt Mirmak
Executive Officer: Becky Roach
Scoutmasters: Ken Steinhart and Keith Bauer

Please join us on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. in Plumer Hall to learn more about Troop 602

RSPV and inquired to: irvinetroop602@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bsatroop602
Website: www.iucc.org/troop602

ALL FEMALE SCOUTS BSA TROOP 602
Irvine, CA

Recruiting Female Youth and Leaders NOW for February 2019

Executing the Aims of the BSA program, which helps ALL youth be “Prepared. For Life.”

Chartered By: Irvine United Congregational Church
Chartered Organization Rep: Matt Mirmak
Executive Officer: Becky Roach
Scoutmasters: Open

Please join us on Tuesday nights at 7 p.m. in Plumer Hall to learn more about this new female troop.

RSPV and inquired to: irvinetroop602@gmail.com
Facebook: www.facebook.com/bsatroop602
Website: www.iucc.org/troop602
Youth Photos
(Photos courtesy of Pastor Sarah Fiske-Phillips)
Let’s get together on social media!

Did you know? You can check for updates on our website (www.iucc.org) and look for pictures and videos on our Facebook page and on Instagram!

Altar Poinsettia Sponsorships
Here is your opportunity to sponsor a poinsettia to honor, celebrate, or memorialize a person or an event. Sign up after service for a $10 donation. Your sponsorship will help put the finishing touches on our sanctuary decorations. Sponsors are welcome to take their poinsettia home after our candlelight service on Christmas Eve. Sign up on the patio after service.

Write for Rights
Sunday, December 9, on the patio
The Advocates for Peace and Justice will join with the Irvine Chapter of Amnesty International to present our annual Amnesty International Write-For-Rights on Sunday, Dec. 9, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tables will be set up on the patio with information on documented cases of unjust detentions and disappearances of individuals from various countries. You are invited to sign pre-written letters and cards to government officials around the world.

Happy Birthday

Women’s Fellowship
Wednesday, December 5, 6:30 p.m.
“Everyone dines for Christmas” as we enjoy a meal with friends. Sign-up on the patio or contact Pat Sauter.

Concern America Craft Sale
Sunday, Dec. 9 on the Patio
Concern America will offer beautiful handmade craft items from El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Bangladesh, and Mozambique on the patio after each service.

The Seeker’s Luncheon
Tuesday, December 18, 11:30 a.m.
The Seeker’s luncheon is at Pat Sauter’s home in Costa del Sol, 28272 Borgona, Mission Viejo, on December 18 at 11:30. Contact Joan McDonald at (949) 552-5593 about food to bring and to carpool from the church.

Coffee Hour Hosts Needed – Funds Provided!
Thank you to our faithful members who have hosted our Sunday morning Coffee Hours this past month. Coffee Hour is such a great time to meet new friends and check in with those whom we value as our church family. Hosting this time is a true ministry to the congregation – and fun as well! Several members have donated funds to underwrite the costs of Coffee Hour snacks and juice. Now we need YOU to step up and volunteer to host Coffee Hour with those funds. Hosts purchase and prepare the snacks and juice, staff the table during the Coffee Hour between services AND briefly after the second service, and clean up the snacks and coffee. If you would like to take advantage of the donated funds, you simply save your receipts and submit them to the Hospitality Chairs, Sandy Exelby and Jan Wilson, for reimbursement. To be a host, go to https://www.signupgenius.com/go/70a0f45acab2ca5f49-iucc to signup on line, or signup on the sheet on the Coffee Hour table any Sunday. And let the Hospitality Chairs know that you intend to make use of the donated funds. Thanks a bunch!

12/3 Jessie Billings 12/21 Finn Macdonald
12/7 Lewis Blackburn 12/24 Aspen McCarty
12/11 Bill Dietrich 12/20 Calla McCarty
12/3 Taelor Exelby 12/30 Shanthi Nataraj
12/23 Andrew Figueroa 12/1 Danny Sanders
12/31 Paul Figueroa 12/17 Nick Sanders
12/7 Alaina Haynes 12/29 Pat Sauter
12/11 Tommie Kozlov 12/17 Todd Thompson
12/21 Elliot Macdonald 12/5 Marie Trout
The word “discipline” means “to teach.” Disciples are “learners” and thus we often see those who followed Jesus refer to him as “Teacher” or Rabbi. The role of parents as disciplinarians is to teach their children how to manage their own behavior.

As we discussed last month, when parents manage their child’s behavior, the child is not learning how to do so, and will thus require constant supervision to avoid “misbehaving.” The primary question a parent wants to ask before ever deciding how to respond to behavior they don’t accept is, “What will my child learn from how I respond?” With that in mind we will devote quite a bit of time to considering “consequences” for behavior in later columns. Before that, however, we want to understand what is motivating a child to act in a specific way. If we don’t know why someone is doing what they are doing, we don’t know how to help them act in a way that is more acceptable to us. So in terms of deciding what to do, the question is: Not what, but why.

Unfortunately, behavior is not diagnostic! There are many different reasons why people do what they do, and many different reasons for different people doing the same behaviors. An un-helpful approach to behavior intervention is to focus only on what a child or young person does. A more helpful approach demands that before responding to what our child did, we understand why they did what they did. I believe the focus on what rather than why explains why unacceptable behavior is repeated so often following interventions meant to get them to stop what they are doing. Not understanding the motive for the behavior prevents us from addressing the real problem. The behavior isn’t the problem, but is a symptom of the problem. The real problem is not getting what they want in an acceptable way.

When we are able to understand behavior, that is, when we can look at and try to understand behavior from a child/youth’s point of view and when we become clear about the purpose of the intervention with such behavior, we can learn to feel more competent and creative in designing and selecting interventions to achieve our objectives. Knowing how to think about both the purposes of behavior and of our interventions with child/youth behavior is as important as knowing what to do.

Informed thinking and clear goal setting can result in feelings of competence and confidence for the adult, feelings of safety and security for children and teens, and helpful, effective and non-hurtful interventions. Clear thinking about how we are going to approach unacceptable behavior promotes feelings of security for children because the parent appears competent and confident rather than inept and ill at ease. Sometimes a child even begins to settle and make adjustments when they see that the parent is starting to think about how they are going to try to help them.

Despite what you may have heard from another adult who is overwhelmed and frustrated, no child does something “for no reason at all!” I’m sure you’ve heard this said at some point, but I would like to suggest that it is a dangerous way to think. If we make behavior mysterious, it becomes something out of our control. In fact, all living things, even amoeba, behave for particular reasons, and never “for no reason at all,” as in “she does that for no reason at all”, which is never true.

A framework of discipline as an approach to behavior intervention looks closely at both the behavior and the motive for the behavior. Why someone is doing what they are doing is more important that what they are doing in terms of arriving at a helpful intervention. There are always other ways to do things.

The influences on behavior are myriad. Some behavior is the result of personal development and is related to temperament and personality, or to one’s self-concept or self-esteem. Some children develop behavior patterns based on what has been rewarded in the past as can be observed in both our pets and our children.

So until next time, ask “why” when you see something you don’t like. There’s always a reason, but young children often don’t even know themselves why they are doing what they are doing. Asking “why” starts them on the path to understanding themselves that will help them learn to do things differently. (It’s no different for us, by the way.)
As the disease progresses, the big looming question is “How will we (I) manage?” I have four priorities.

My first priority is to keep George safe. Some days I tire of hearing my own voice: Use your walker; the seat on the walker is helpful if you want to rest. Enjoy your exercise class. Here’s a glass of juice. Your pills are on the table. Our schedule for today is on the white board on the refrigerator. Wear your safety pendant. On and on.

I feel like I’m becoming his mother. Am I watching over him like a child? A wise friend reminds me, “Vivian, you are not his mother. You are his memory.” What amazing insight! Her simple statement puts my caregiving into perspective. I am his memory.

A second priority is to provide stimulation for George: mental, emotional and spiritual. Since his sight and hearing are diminished, it is important to help him to see and hear. He enjoys listening to books on his Kindle, a gift from our daughters and their husbands. He uses a lighted and magnified reading device to read some material. One thing we both enjoy takes place at the morning breakfast table: I read emails and Facebook posts to him; that way he is aware of the news of family and friends. I was a big photo album maker. Now, George is reminded of trips and events as he scans the old albums, asking me to read the captions.

Later in the day, I read our mail to him. It’s a gift when a personal letter or card peeks out from the pile of advertisements. When he hears the kind words written to and about him, he perks up and his eyes dance (not like a polka, more like a waltz). One of George’s favorite activities is patio time. He settles into his comfortable chair, pillow behind his back, feet resting on the footstool, and thinks. Wearing his ever-present Norwegian sea captain’s hat, he waves and nods to those who pass by. With diminished sight and hearing, he doesn’t always recognize the person, but greets them nevertheless. The sun warms his body and the patio experience warms his soul. He enjoys classical music, another “speaks-to-the-soul” activity, and his mind is stimulated as he accompanies friends to a monthly lecture in Los Angeles.

A third priority is to involve others in his well-being. Fortunately, we have several families: our immediate and extended family, the church family, our worldwide friends, and the family here where we live in Regents Point, a continuing care community. As a friend said, “Let me do something. It makes me feel better.” I’m learning to invite people to accompany us on outings. It is of great help to me and it gives George interaction with others besides his ever-present wife. We continue our long practice of inviting people for wine ‘n cheese in our home. Rather than trying to put together a meal, this is manageable for me and provides a social life for him. George truly appreciates it when people come over and read to him. This provides both social and intellectual stimulation.

While much of my energy goes to focusing on keeping George safe, stimulated, and in involving others in his well-being, I have a fourth priority: caring for myself. In our relationship, I value him; however, as in any relationship, I, also, must value myself. I’m learning the importance of respite time. Time away renews my energy and desire to continue the dual role of caregiver and wife. It helps me maintain a lightness of spirit, affection, and humor – all the sweet parts of marriage.

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In my most vulnerable times I don’t know if I can manage. Like my train dream suggests, do I want to leave, do I want to get off the Alzheimer’s train? No! My resolve is as firm and as deep as the roots of the 300-year-old tree that I admire in the park. I don’t want to get off the Alzheimer’s train. I want to learn to ride it. This is important for me to underscore to George; I don’t want him to worry that I will leave, not physically nor emotionally. I will not abandon him. I will love him.

At the conclusion of the communion service at our church, we say these words that never fail to bring tears to my eyes, “... Give thanks always and everywhere that life is precious beyond all telling.” Yes, life is precious beyond all telling, even with Alzheimer’s.
Advent marks the beginning of the Christian church year, our “January 1st.” Advent does not have a specific date but is always four Sundays before December 25. In 2016, the fourth Sunday in Advent was also Christmas Day, so it was pushed aside for the Christ-Mass celebration.

Because the roots of Christianity are Jewish, I believe that the Christian church calendar has been framed around Judaism’s liturgical calendar. Our Advent is always close to Chanukah (Hanukah), which in Judaism is a festival commemorating the dedication of the Second Temple in 515 BCE.

Easter is similar. The date is always based on the Sunday after the first full moon of the spring equinox (anywhere from March 22 to April 18) while its Jewish counterpart, Passover, is celebrated on the 15th day of the Jewish month of Nissan, also around the first full moon of the Spring equinox.

I bring this up because so often we Christians forget that Jesus was Jewish, as was Paul and most of the writers in the New Testament. This means, to obtain the true meaning of the stories in the Bible, we can’t read them literally but through Jewish eyes to find the truth inside the fictional story.

Most folks interpret “coming to” as coming to Christmas but I believe that it means “coming to” another year when we, as Followers, relive the life of Jesus and his impact on our lives. Christians are about Easter, not December 25th.

In most mainstream churches, the church year is on a 3-year cycle, “A”, “B” and “C.” This year at IUCC, Advent Sunday is December 2 and it marks the end of liturgical calendar “B” and the start of “C” where we have a chance to live the life of Jesus through very different scriptural readings than the previous two years.

For me, a Progressive Christian, the most important message for the entire church year was written by a young woman participating in one of our volunteer programs in Hawai’i. It was sent on a homemade Christmas card and read: “Christmas presence – give yourself away!” For me, this is my daily message meant to change me and the world radically!

PeaceLoveJoyHope
Bil

The Eight Points of Progressive Christianity:

By calling ourselves Progressive Christians, we mean we are Christians who...

1. Believe that following the path and the teachings of Jesus can lead to an awareness and experience of the Sacred and the Oneness and Unity of all life;
2. Affirm that the teachings of Jesus provide but one of the many ways to experience the Sacredness and Oneness of life, and that we can draw from diverse sources of wisdom in our spiritual journey;
3. Seek community that is inclusive of ALL people, including but not limited to: * Conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, * Believers and agnostics, * Women and men, * Those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, * Those of all classes and abilities;
4. Know that the way we behave towards one another is the fullest expression of what we believe;
5. Find grace in the search for understanding and believe there is more value in questioning than in absolutes;
6. Strive for peace and justice among all people;
7. Strive to protect and restore the integrity of our Earth;
8. Commit to a path of life-long learning, compassion and selfless love.
Nothing says the Holidays quite like...Samurai films. And when it comes to Samurai films, there was nobody as jolly as Akira Kurosawa.

Akira Kurosawa was born in Tokyo on March 23, 1910, the youngest of eight children. His father, Isamu, encouraged his children to expose themselves to world culture, including world cinema. By 1935, Akira found a job as an assistant director at the Photo Chemical Laboratories, later to become Toho Studios. At P.C.L., Akira came under the tutelage of Kajiro Yamamoto.

By 1941, with Yamamoto’s encouragement, Kurosawa released his first film, *Sanshiro Sugata*. In 1948, Kurosawa released *Drunken Angel*, his first film with Toshiro Mifune, the most important collaborator of Kurosawa’s post war career. In 1950, their first major collaboration exploded onto the world stage. Set in Feudal Japan, *Rashomon* deals with a murder from the viewpoints of each of the three characters involved in the story. In 1951, it won both the Golden Lion at Venice and an Honorary Academy Award. That award helped bring major film makers like Stanley Kubrick, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas, Martin Scorsese and Stephen Spielberg under Kurosawa’s spell.

1) *Rashomon* (1951) – See the description above.
2) *Ikiru* (1952) – A man on the verge of death finds his humanity. It stars Takashi Shimura, another essential Kurosawa collaborator.
3) *The Seven Samurai* (1954) – Easily, one of the greatest films ever made. The inspiration behind *The Magnificent Seven*.
4) *Throne of Blood* (1957) – Kurosawa’s first attempt at retelling Shakespeare in a Samurai setting. You’ll never look at pin cushions the same way again.
5) *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) – George Lucas later turned this one into a space opera you might know. It’s called *Star Wars*.
7) *Sanjuro* (1962) – Another tough guy Samurai movie starting Toshiro Mifune. It’s one of my favorites.
8) *Red Beard* (1965) – Loosely based on a Dostoyevsky story, it tells the tale of a tough guy doctor who travels throughout the countryside treating peasants.
9) *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1967) – Kurosawa and David Lean were originally chosen to direct this film. They weren’t allowed to finish it, however. That’s Hollywood for ya.
11) *Ran* (1985) – Kurosawa retells King Lear with breathtaking color, stunning battle sequences and superb acting. One of the finest examples of Shakespearean cinema I can think of. Goose flesh and tears!
12) *Dreams* (1990) – Not his best, but Martin Scorsese plays Vincent Van Gogh. How can you resist?