

NEWSLETTER (SUPPLEMENTAL) 22 JANUARY 2023

Posted on January 22, 2023 by Andrew Brown

Greetings to you all. It was lovely seeing so many of you on Zoom this morning (there were 27 of us in total).

Like many of you I found the opportunity to talk after the service in the way we did during lockdown very enjoyable and fruitful and it makes me ask again how we can continue to experience this in addition to our now regular hybrid-face-to-face-zoom Sunday morning service? A plan does exist amongst a few members of the committee to try to get a conversation group going soon, so please watch this space.

I also have another idea which I'll share with you in the next week or so that's connected with my work compiling and co-editing a book of essays by the important twentieth-century advocate of free-religion in Japan, Shinichiro Imaoka (1881-1988) who also founded the post-World War 2 Unitarian Church in Tokyo called Kiitsu Kyōkai (帰一協会).

Kiitsu 帰一 means "oneness" or "unity," and Kyōkai can be written in two ways, 協會 or 協会, which have subtly different meanings. The first rendering, 協會, means "assembly" or "association," whilst the second, 協会, leans more towards the meaning of "school." Imaoka sensei used the second rendering of Kiitsu Kyōkai (帰一協会) to foreground the idea of gathering together in order to learn and grow. If you want to know more about Imaoka sensei, the book of essays and a biography about him by George M. Williams are now freely available at the following link:

<<https://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/p/free-religion.html>>

It is not insignificant that for much of his life Imaoka sensei practised a form of meditation called Seiza (Quiet Sitting) both on his own and in Kiitsu Kyōkai meetings. In recent months I've been joining a small online Seiza group that is run in New York by a Jodo

Shinshu priest in New York called Miki Nakura sensei. He has very kindly made available, for free, a short course teaching Seiza meditation that is hosted by the American Buddhist Study Center. You can check that out, should you wish, at the following link:

<<https://ambuddhist.teachable.com/p/seiza-sit-still-meditation-by-rev-miki-nakura> >

Miki Nakura sensei is planning to visit the UK later this year and there is a good chance that he will come and visit us in Cambridge and those who wish can learn Seiza from him in person. Naturally, I'll let you know if that comes to pass.

Joy also reminded us that in May (on the evening of Tuesday 16th and all day on Wednesday 17th) a number of monastics from Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village Community will be here in our church running a workshop on Mindfulness Meditation. Again, more details will be coming your way at some point.

Recently an article on Seiza appeared in the Kyoto Journal and you can read this at the following link:

<<https://www.kyotojournal.org/spirit/the-life-and-times-of-okada-torajiro-and-his-seiza-method-of-self-harmonization/> >

On another (not entirely unconnected) matter, in the first breakout group I was in (with Clare, Joy, Kate, Jerry and Caroline) we were sharing with each other various thoughts that had been thrown up connected with the theme of my short address

<<https://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/2023/01/liberal-free-religioncatching-moving.html> >.

During that conversation, I read a short poem by William Stafford and I promised I'd share that with you:

<<https://www.cambridgeunitarian.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Improving-your-dreams-by-William-Stafford.pdf>>

I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Warmly, as ever,

Andrew