

Our “Principles of Living” [2024]

written by members of Cambridge Unitarians

and also

“Principles of Living” [1973]

“Principles of Living” [1981]

by Imaoka Shin’ichirō (1881-1988)

“Principles of Living”

by Norbert Fabián Čapek (1870–1942)



CAMBRIDGE 2025

“Our Principles of Living” written by members of Cambridge Unitarians based on the “Principles of Living” of the Japanese Unitarian and advocate of free-religion, Imaoka Shin’ichirō (1881-1988)

Within this creative, inquiring, free and liberative religious gathering, we seek to:

- 1) Nurture ourselves** — desiring to grow into the most creative, sociable, compassionate and autonomous individuals we can be.
- 2) Support our neighbours** — and, in so doing, remember that each individual we meet deserves the same love and respect as we do ourselves.
- 3) Build a co-operative society** — because all lives are intertwined, none of us exists in isolation. A co-operative society, in which we find solidarity, fellowship and community, lights the way for us all.
- 4) Find strength in community** — our local gathering can be a microcosm of the co-operative society we seek to build. Here, we support one another in our journeys, sharing our joys and sorrows as we work together towards a better world.
- 5) Draw on insights from all creative, inquiring, free and liberative religions and philosophies** — seeking to understand their essence and ideals, and finding ways to apply these to the modern world in which we live.
- 6) Care for the world around us** — celebrating being part of nature, cherishing the beauty we witness, and seeking to repair damage and tread as lightly as we can.

7) Affirm that there is no fundamental distinction between the sacred and the secular — and that all human activities — politics, economy, education, art, labour and even domestic affairs — can also be expressions of free-religion.

—o0o—

A note about two key terms used in both versions of “Principles of Living” by Imaoka Shin’ichirō (1881-1988), printed below

1. Free-Religion — jiyū shūkyō

“Free-religion” is a translation of the Japanese term *jiyū shūkyō* (自由宗教). Although “free-religion” is a perfectly acceptable translation, it should always be understood more expansively to mean something like, “a dynamic, creative, inquiring, free and liberative religion or spirituality.”

2. Kiitsu Kyōkai — Returning-to-One Gathering

Kiitsu Kyōkai (帰一教会 or 帰一教會) was the name of Imaoka-sensei’s post-1948 free-religious community in Tokyo. *Kiitsu* (帰一) means “returning-to-one,” and *kyōkai* (教会) means “church” or “congregation.” In general—though not exclusively—in Japanese, *kyōkai* (教会) refers to a *Christian* church. For this reason, *Kiitsu Kyōkai* has often been translated as “Unitarian Church.” However, a better translation is, “Returning-to-One Gathering.” This matters because Imaoka-sensei’s community was always more than simply a *church*, even a *Unitarian* Church. It was, instead, a free-religious gathering in which, through the practise of Seiza Meditation (Quiet Sitting), talks, free and rational inquiry, mutual discovery, learning and conversation, Imaoka-sensei hoped to create a community that

would unite (*kiitsu*) all its members in the common cause of creating a more just, equitable, beautiful, and humane society (*kyōkai*) that did not make a hard and fast distinction between the sacred the secular. More than just a church or temple, *Kiitsu Kyōkai* was also a “school” or “institute” for the study of free-religion. In his manuscripts, and on their noticeboard outside the hall at Seisoku Academy (where he served as Principal from 1925 to 1973), he tried to indicate all this by using an older combination of Chinese characters for *kyōkai* (教會 rather than 教会), thus writing the name as 歸一教會. He chose to do this because, in Confucian contexts, which emphasised communal learning and moral/ethical cultivation, 會 (*kai*) was used in terms that referred to gatherings concerned with the mutual exchange of ideas rather than the passing on of fixed doctrines.

—o0o—

**My Principles of Living (Revised) [August 1973]
by Imaoka Shin'ichirō (1881-1988)**

- 1) I place trust/have faith in myself** — I become aware of my own subjectivity, creativity [and sociality], and feel the worth of living in life. Subjectivity, creativity [and sociality] can also be expressed as personality, divinity, and Buddha-nature.
- 2) I place trust/have faith in my neighbour** — A neighbour is oneself as a neighbour. If I place trust/have faith in myself, I inevitably place trust/have faith in my neighbour.
- 3) I place trust/have faith in a cooperative society** — Both oneself and a neighbour, while each possessing a unique personality, are not things that exist in isolation. Because of this uniqueness, a true

interdependence, true solidarity, and true human love are established, and therein a cooperative society is realised.

4) I place trust/have faith in the trinity of self, neighbour, and cooperative society — The self, neighbour, and cooperative society, while each having a unique personality, are entirely one. Therefore, there's no differentiation of precedence or of superiority or inferiority between them, and one always contains the other.

5) I place trust/have faith in the unity of life and nature — Life, which consists of the trinity of self, neighbour, and cooperative society, further unites and merges with all of existence—heaven, earth, and all things.

6) I place trust/have faith in the church (*kyōkai*) — The church (*kyōkai*) is the prototype/archetype and motivating power of the cooperative society. I can only be myself by being a member of the church (*kyōkai*).

7) I place trust/have faith in a specific religion — In other words, I am a member of the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai. However, a specific religion — including the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai — neither monopolises religious truth nor is it the ultimate embodiment of it.

8) I place trust/have faith in free-religion (*jiyū shūkyō*) — While having faith in a specific religion, the endless pursuit and improvement towards universal and ultimate truth is the core of religious life. Such a dynamic religion is called a free-religion (*jiyū shūkyō*).

—o0o—

**My Principles of Living — Revised Again (Tentative) [1981]
by Imaoka Shin'ichirō (1881-1988)**

1) I affirm myself — I am aware of my own subjectivity, creativity and sociality, and feel the worth of living in life through them. Subjectivity, creativity and sociality can also be expressed as personality, divinity, and Buddha-nature.

2) I affirm/trust others — Others are neighbours who possess their own selves as others. By affirming myself, I inevitably affirm/trust others.

3) I affirm the cooperative society — Neither self nor others exist in isolation or self-sufficiency; instead, they inevitably establish a mutual interdependency, solidarity, and a cooperative society.

4) I affirm the trinity of self, others, and cooperative society — The self, others, and the cooperative society, while each possessing unique individualities, unite into one (*kiitsu*). Therefore, there is no precedence or superiority among them; each always presupposes the other two.

5) I affirm/attain the universal/cosmic cooperative society — The trinity of self, others, and the cooperative society further unites with heaven and earth and all things, to form a universal/cosmic cooperative society.

6) I affirm the church (*kyōkai*) — The church (*kyōkai*) is a microcosm of the universal/cosmic cooperative society. I can only be myself by being a member of the church (*kyōkai*).

Addendum: I interpret the above faith as free-religion (*jiyū shūkyō*) and, as a free-religionist, together with my companions, I belong to the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai, the Japan Free Religion Association, and the International Association for Religious Freedom. However, free-religion is neither opposed to established religions nor does it seek to integrate them. Instead, it aims to grasp and realise the essence and ideals, not only of various religions, but also all human activities. Therefore, these principles are nothing other than the attitude of life I always wish constantly to maintain.

—o0o—

**Ten Principles of Living by the Czech Unitarian,
Norbert Fabián Čapek (1870–1942)**

- 1) Live simply** — Live in such a way that you have few needs. Don't worry unnecessarily, especially don't let other people's worries trouble you. Be content with what you have.
- 2) Don't cling to material things** — Remember that material things are fleeting. Be interested in deeper things; you will gain more. Keep your inner freedom.
- 3) Live with beauty** — Don't forget beautiful, joyful moments, but let go of sad, unpleasant ones. Rid yourself of anger, resentment, hatred, and forgive those who hurt you. Be grateful for kindness, and don't forget it.
- 4) Live in the present** — True life is what you are experiencing right now. Don't fear the future – trust in it. Don't think about old age, and don't dwell too much on the past.

5) Be creative — Don't be idle and always keep yourself occupied with something. Stay curious; always learn and educate yourself.

6) Seek beauty — Take joy in beautiful things, nature, music, literature, and other arts. Beauty is food for the soul.

7) Rejoice — Keep yourself in good spirits. Cultivate humour, and remember that a cheerful mind is half of both health and beauty.

8) Love people — Show kindness to others, and they'll show it to you. Help others! Think more about making others happy than about your own troubles. If you can't say something good about others, it's better to remain silent.

9) Be modest — Practise moderation and restraint in all things.

10) Have faith — Take care of your faith in God – the Supreme Wisdom. Be aware of its presence within yourself and in everything.

—o0o—

For more information please contact the minister:

Andrew James Brown

Email: caute.brown@gmail.com

<http://www.cambridgeunitarian.org/>

<http://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/>