

Our “Principles of Living”

written by members of Cambridge Unitarians

and also

“Principles of Living” [1973]

“Principles of Living” [1981]

by Imaoka Shin’ichirō (1881-1988)

“Ten Advices”

by Norbert Fabián Čapek (1870–1942)



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“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.

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

1. Jiyū Shūkyō — Free-Religion

Although “free-religion” is a perfectly acceptable translation of the Japanese term *jiyū shūkyō* (自由宗教), 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 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” because it gives us a sense of the *dynamic*, creative, inquiring, free and liberative religion or spirituality it aspired to teach. This matters because Imaoka-sensei’s *Kiitsu Kyōkai* was always more than simply a temple or church, even a *Unitarian* one, this is because it was also a “school” in which a person could learn about and study *jiyū shūkyō* alongside other free-religionists (*jiyū shūkyōjin*). In the *Kiitsu Kyōkai*, through the practise

of Seiza Meditation (Quiet Sitting), talks, free and rational inquiry, mutual discovery, learning and conversation, Imaoka-sensei hoped to create a lay-led, cooperative 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. In his manuscripts, and on their noticeboard outside the hall where they met in the Seisoku Academy (where he served as Principal from 1925 to 1973), he attempted to indicate all this by using an older combination of Chinese characters for *kyōkai* (using 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.

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

I. I have faith in Self. By awakening to the Agency and Creativity of the Self, I experience life as deeply worth living. Agency and Creativity may also be described as Humanity, Divinity, Buddha-nature, and so on.

II. I have faith in Neighbours. Neighbours are the Self as neighbour. By having faith in the Self, I inevitably have faith in Neighbours.

III. I have faith in Cooperative Community. Though Self and Neighbours each possess unique individuality, they never exist in

solitary isolation. Because they are unique, true mutual interdependence, true solidarity, and true human love are established, and therein Cooperative Community is realised.

IV. I have faith in the Trinity of Self, Neighbours, and Cooperative Community. Self, Neighbours, and Cooperative Community, while each retaining unique individuality, are completely one. Therefore, there is no difference in priority or superiority among them; one always contains the other two within it.

V. I have faith in the return-to-one/kiitsu of human life and nature. Human life, which constitutes the Trinity of Self, Neighbours, and Cooperative Community, further returns-to-one/kiitsu and unites with all beings throughout Heaven and Earth.

VI. I have faith in the Church/Kyōkai. The Church/Kyōkai is the prototype and driving force of the Cooperative Community. Only by belonging to the Church/Kyōkai do I truly become myself.

VII. I have faith in specific religion. In other words, I am a member of the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai. However, specific religion (including the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai) does not monopolise religious truth, nor is it the ultimate embodiment of religious truth.

VIII. I have faith in free-religion/jiyū shūkyō. Even while having faith in a specific religion, the core of the religious life is to continue the endless search for truth and advancement toward universal, ultimate truth; such a dynamic religion is called free-religion/jiyū shūkyō.

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

I. I have faith in Self. By awakening to the Agency, Creativity, and Sociality of the Self, I experience life as deeply worth living. Agency, Creativity, and Sociality may also be described as Humanity, Divinity, and Buddha-nature.

II. I have faith in Others. Others are neighbours who possess the Self as others. By having faith in the Self, I inevitably have faith in Others.

III. I have faith in Cooperative Community. Though Self and Others each possess unique individuality, they never exist in solitary isolation; rather, they inevitably give rise to mutual interdependence, solidarity, and Cooperative Community.

IV. I have faith in the Trinity of Self, Others, and Cooperative Community. Self, Others, and Cooperative Community, while each retaining unique individuality, return-to-one/kiitsu. Therefore, there is no difference in priority or superiority among them; each always presupposes the other two.

V. I have faith in the Cosmic Cooperative Community. The Trinity of Self, Others, and Cooperative Community further unites with all beings throughout Heaven and Earth, forming a Cosmic Cooperative Community.

VI. I have faith in the Church/Kyōkai. The Church/Kyōkai is a microcosm of the Cosmic Cooperative Community. Only by belonging to the Church/Kyōkai do I truly become myself.

Addendum: I interpret the above faith as free-religion/jiyū shūkyō and, as a free-religionist/jiyū shūkyōjin, 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 actualise the quintessence and ideals, not only of the various religions, but also all human activities. Therefore, these principles are nothing other than the attitude of life I always wish constantly to maintain.

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Ten Advices

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 through beauty. Don't forget beautiful, joyful moments, but do forget sad, unpleasant ones. Rid yourself of anger, resentment, hatred, and forgive those who hurt you. Be grateful for the good, and don't forget it.

4) Live through 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 nourishment 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) Be loving towards 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. Maintain moderation and restraint in all things.

10) Have faith. Take care of your faith in God – the Supreme Wisdom (*Nejvyšší Moudrost* [f.]). Be aware of her presence within yourself and in everything.

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