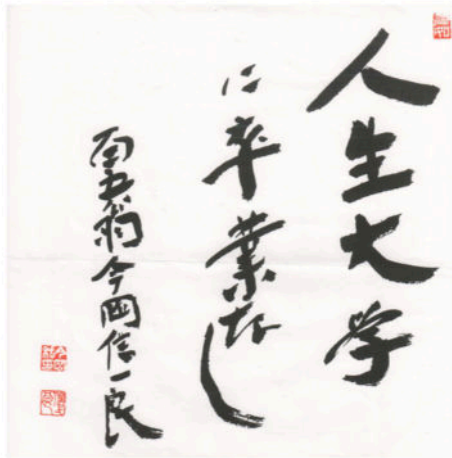


# KIITSU KYŌKAI

(歸一教會)



*"In the university of human life there is no graduation."*

*Calligraphy by IMAOKA Shin'ichirō*

# Cambridge

**A short period of  
Seiza Meditation (Quiet Sitting)**

**Lighting of a candle**

**Opening words:**

Mindful of truth ever exceeding our knowledge, and community ever exceeding our practice, reverently we meet together, beginning with ourselves as we are, to share the strength of integrity and the heritage of the spirit, in the unending quest for wisdom and love.

**A short reading and/or talk**

**Music (optional)**

**A time of conversation**

**A moment of silence ended with the following words  
(said together):**

We receive fragments of holiness, glimpses of eternity, brief moments of insight. Let us gather them up for the precious gifts that they are and, renewed by their grace, begin to walk a path that is safer than the known way.

**Closing words by Imaoka Shin'ichirō:**

May we all be persistent in a free, creative, and universal faith,  
and go forward for the purpose of realizing the  
Kingdom of God, or Pure Land of Buddha,  
that is nothing but the Ideal Community.

Amen.

## **The Purpose of *Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai* (1950) Imaoka Shin'ichirō**

It is not possible to state precisely when the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai (東京帰一教会 or 東京帰一教會) was established. The first Sunday meeting was held in October of Shōwa 23 (1948), but it did not suddenly come into existence at that time. Since then, nearly two years have passed, yet there are still some aspects that remain unclear. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a simple explanation of its character, but as one of the individuals involved, I would like to attempt a brief explanation based on my perspective.

Firstly, the name 帰一 (Kiitsu) is translated into English as “Unity,” and it does not exclude the meaning of “Unitarian” (ユニテリアン). However, it’s clear that it’s not “Unitarian” in opposition to “Trinitarian.” Recent Unitarian movements in the United States have undergone significant changes, becoming not only liberal Christianity but also a movement beyond Christianity. In that sense, I believe our Kiitsu Kyōkai can also be considered Unitarian.

The Unitarian movement (ユニテリアン運動) in Japan had been quite active during the Meiji and Taisho eras but gradually declined due to various circumstances, although it didn’t completely vanish. To be precise, it can be said that the movement still continues today, albeit weakly. I feel this way as one of those who participated in the movement. Therefore, when I established the Kiitsu Kyōkai, my primary consideration was the revival of the Unitarian movement. However, I thought that a mere revival, that is, a mere reproduction of the old Unitarian Church (ユニテリアン教会), would be meaningless. I regarded the Kiitsu Kyōkai as a continuation of the former Unitarian Church but with a significant transformation. In other words, I believed that the

Kiitsu Kyōkai should be something more than just a sect of Christianity. To put it another way, it asserts a free, pure, non-denominational religion (自由純粹な超宗派の宗教) that is non-sectarian (超宗派),<sup>1</sup> which goes beyond denominational bounds, taking a step further than just being a liberal Christianity against orthodox Christianity. However, when I mention going beyond denominational bounds, this might be criticised as being abstract, conceptual, and utterly lacking in realism. If the Kiitsu Kyōkai were to become something like that, it would be contrary to our expectations. Beyond or trans-denominational simply means not being overly attached to established religions like Buddhism or Christianity. In our belief, it's not that Buddhism or Christianity exists first and then we come after. On the contrary, we exist first, and only then comes Buddhism or Christianity. Hence, our religion shouldn't be a ready-made Buddhism or Christianity, but a made-to-order religion that truly responds to our needs. A so-called ideal religion crafted by gathering the best parts from all religions might also be termed as trans-denominational. But still, this would be a ready-made religion and is certainly not our religion. So, the trans-denominational religion we envision is the exact opposite of an abstract conceptual one; rather, it represents the most personal, realistic, and tangible form of faith. And if a personal religion that best responds to our needs happens to be Buddhism or Christianity, then naturally, we would become Buddhists or Christians. However, there are many in the world who can't be satisfied with ready-made, established religions. In essence, our assertion of being trans-denominational is not about rejecting established religions, but solely about being faithful to our genuine demands. In other words, it's the same as when Shinran Shonin said that the

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<sup>1</sup> 超宗派 can also be translated as “interdenominational” or “trans-denominational”

teachings of Amida are for Shinran alone.

However, there might be some who worry that if each individual's religion becomes so varied, forming a religious community would be impossible. But such a worry is groundless. Just as a true cooperative community (真の共同社会) can be organised only by the gathering of individuals with distinct personalities and characters, a true church can be organised only by those who truly possess a personal and autonomous religion.

Thus, even though it is referred to as trans-denominational, in reality, it doesn't transcend denominations absolutely. To be precise, it ends up creating a new denomination called trans-denominational. However, the nature of this denomination certainly differs greatly from the usual sense of the word "denomination" (宗派).

To be truly individualistic and free, and at the same time to be truly collective and social is, in other words, to be democratic (民主主義的). And this democracy must be consistent not only in terms of faith content but also in the aspect of church politics. Therefore, we advocate for "Congregationalism" (会衆主義) and layperson-ism (平教徒主義 *heikōtoshugi*). Worship and sermons are entrusted to volunteers from among the members. Consequently, at our Sunday gatherings, it is not guaranteed that we will always have eloquent sermons from great speakers. Nevertheless, we believe that the church does not belong to the pastor but to its members and, therefore, we highly value the mutual encouragement and assistance of all members. In this respect, one might say our church is in the style of the Quakers (クエーカー).

Another significant aspect of our religion being democratic is our belief that salvation is both personal and social. We don't believe that a society is saved by the gathering

of saved individuals; rather, we believe that individual salvation and societal salvation are two sides of the same coin. I want to believe that until all living beings attain Buddhahood, Hōzō Bosatsu (法蔵菩薩)<sup>2</sup> cannot himself attain Buddhahood. Therefore, in a sense, Hōzō Bosatsu has not yet attained Buddhahood. Hōzō Bosatsu can never attain Buddhahood just for himself; his attainment is simultaneous with that of all living beings. I believe this is also the meaning behind the Catholic Church's claim that there is no salvation outside the church. In this regard, I deeply resonate with the Community Church movement in the United States, initiated by Dr. J. H. Holmes. For a while before we named our church Kiitsu Kyōkai it was called "The Community Church of Tokyo" (東京市民教会 lit. "Tokyo Citizens Church").

With this perspective in mind, there is profound significance in the fact that during the Meiji and Taisho eras, Abe Isoo-shi (安部磯雄氏), the central figure of the Unitarian movement in Japan, was a leader of the social movement in Japan. Suzuki Bunji-shi (鈴木文治氏) started the labour union movement (労働組合運動) while serving as the secretary of the Japan Unitarian Association (日本ユニテリアン協会). Furthermore, Nagai Ryūtarō-shi (永井柳太郎氏) and Uchizaki Sakusaburō-shi (内崎作三郎氏), who both studied at the Unitarian seminary in Oxford,<sup>3</sup> subsequently made significant strides in Japanese politics. If one were to point out any shortcomings in the Unitarian movement of these esteemed predecessors, it might be that it leaned too much towards the political and social aspects, leaving the religious aspect somewhat diluted. During the Meiji and Taisho eras, in

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<sup>2</sup> Also known as Bodhisattva Dharmakara, the name of Amida Buddha whilst he was still a Bodhisattva.

<sup>3</sup> Manchester College, now Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

essence, the Unitarian movement had more significance as an enlightenment movement within the wider religious realm rather than as a religious movement itself. And, even today, enlightenment movements are necessary because the dispelling of superstitions, the encouragement of harmony between science and religion, and the promotion of cultural and peace movements, remain of paramount importance. However, the aspiration of our Kiitsu Kyōkai is to move one step beyond our former high point by fully committing to a free, pure, democratic, and universal religious faith. This faith serves as our driving force to address and solve all issues related to culture, politics, economy, society, etc. While we greatly value intelligence, our church, being a religious organisation, must not transform into a mere debating hall for intellectuals. Our church should be a microcosm of the ideal society. It must embrace scholars and the uneducated, business people, labourers, civil servants, students, men, women, the elderly, and the young. My secret wish is for individuals like Shōtoku Taishi (聖徳太子 Prince Shōtoku) or [Albert] Schweitzer to emerge from our community.

*(Showa 25 [1950], September, "Creation" [創造], Issue No. 1)*

A biography and some of Imaoka sensei's writings can be downloaded freely at:

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

## **My Principles of Living (revised) (August 1973)** **Imaoka Shin'ichirō**

“My Principles of Living” consisting of seven articles was established in February of the 40th year of Showa (1965) as my personal statement of faith. Over time, and with the support and feedback from the members of Tokyo Kiitsu Kyokai and others, it became a tradition collectively to recite these articles together during its Sunday gatherings. However, later on, I felt the need to declare faith in nature as the foundational source of human existence and life. Therefore, a new article has been added after the fourth article in the revised version below, resulting in a total of eight articles. The freedom of free religion primarily signifies individual internal freedom, and it deeply respects this freedom. Therefore, this statement of faith is not binding on the members in any way, but I would be happy if each one of you were to use it as a reference in helping you to formulate your own principles of living. In this sense, I humbly request your thoughtful consideration and critique, not only of the new fifth article, but of all the articles.

**1. I have faith (信ずる) in myself.** I recognize my own subjectivity (主体性) and creativity (創造性), and feel the worth of living in life (生きがい). Subjectivity (主体性) and creativity (創造性) can be translated or replaced with personality (人格), divinity (神性), and Buddha-nature (仏性).

**2. I have faith in my neighbour (隣人).** A neighbour is oneself (自己) as a neighbour. If I have faith in myself, I inevitably have faith in my neighbour.

**3. I have faith in a cooperative society (共同社会).** Both oneself and a neighbour, while each possessing a unique



personality (特異な個性), are not things that exist in isolation (孤立独存). Because of this uniqueness, a true interdependence (真の相互依存), true solidarity (真の連帯性), and true human love (真の人間愛) are established, and therein a cooperative society is realised.

**4. I 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 superiority/inferiority between them, and one always contains the other.

**5. I have faith in the unity (帰一) of life (人生) and nature (自然).** Life, which constitutes the trinity of self, neighbour, and cooperative society, further unites with all things in the universe.

**6. I have faith in the church (教会 or 教會).** The church is the prototype/archetype (原型) and driving force of the cooperative society. I can only be myself by being a member of the church.

**7. I have faith in a specific religion.** In other words, I am a member of the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyokai (帰一協会 or 帰一教會). However, a specific religion (including the Tokyo Kiitsu Kyokai) neither monopolises religious truth nor is it the ultimate embodiment of it.

**8. I have faith in free-religion (自由宗教).** While having faith in a specific religion, the endless pursuit and improvement towards universal (普遍的真理) and ultimate truth (究極的真

理) is the core of religious life (宗教生活の中核). Such a dynamic religion (動的宗教) is called a free-religion.

(August, Showa 48, 1973, “Free Religion” — draft trans. Andrew J. Brown)

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## **Statement of Faith (Tentative) for my Daily Life (1983)**

*A typewritten statement of faith (in English) to which is attached Imaoka Shin'ichirō's handwritten set of notes, also in English. Dated January 1st 1983. This typewritten text was published by the Japan Free Religious Association and distributed at the 1984 I.A.R.F. Conference in Tokyo.*

### **1. I BELIEVE IN SELF**

Awakened to the autonomy, sociality and creativity within me, I find my daily life worth living. Autonomy, sociality and creativity may be called Personality, Divinity and Buddhahood.

### **2. I BELIEVE IN OTHERS**

Because of my belief in Self, I can not help but believe in Others who have their own Selves as neighbors.

### **3. I BELIEVE IN COMMUNITY**

Both my Self and other Selves are unique but not absolutely distinct from each other. Hence solidarity, fellowship and Community will be realized.

### **4. I BELIEVE IN THE COSMIC COMMUNITY**

Not only Self, Others and Community, but all nature in addition, are one and constitute the Cosmic Community.

## **5. I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH**

The Church epitomizes the Cosmic Community and I will be a cosmic man by joining the Church.

### **Handwritten notes added to the [1983] “Statement of Faith for my daily life”**

1. Free religion is not a ready made religion and has not a creed or dogma except a tentative statement.
2. Particular religion is Free Religion if it does not insist on a monopoly of truth and applies itself diligently to seek after truth in others too.
3. Free Religion is neither a new religion that unifies all particular religions but is ~~immanent~~ within ~~them~~ particular religions as their essence.
4. Because I and others are not quite independent of each other and form a community, Free Religion is both individual and community religion.
5. Because Free Religion is nothing but the realization of the pure and genuine human nature consisting of autonomy, creativity and sociality, all human activities, i.e., politics, economy, education, art, labor and even domestic affairs are also Free Religion as much as they are also realization[s] of the same fundamental human nature. There is no fundamental distinction between the sacred and the secular.
6. Free Religion is more than the cooperation of religions and the world peace movement.

*Shinichiro Imaoka, January 1st 1983*

## A note about Seiza Meditation

*“Do not seek, sit down quietly in the country of unconditioned spontaneity. If there is but a space three feet square to sit, the spring of heaven and earth will fill this space, raising life’s energy and joy within yourself. Seiza-sitting is truly a gate into great rest and happiness.”— Okada Torajiro (1872-1920)*

Seiza (静坐 — literally, “quiet sitting”) meditation was developed and established by Okada-sensei in Japan during the early years of the 20th century and was the form of meditation practised by Imaoka-sensei. It is exceptionally minimalistic and does not rely upon any external organizations, temples, churches, tithing, dogma, theory, canon, worship, beliefs, literature, scriptures, calendar, prayers, hymns, priesthood, hierarchy, relics, icons, saints, homage, cults of personality, holidays, myths, cosmology, symbols, architecture, laws or commandments. Neither is Seiza tied to particular intellectual, rational or medical ideas or theories. It does not depend on emotion, piety, nor devotionism. It is not otherworldly, mystical, nor renunciatory. It is not tied to a particular race, ethnicity, or culture. It is not congressional and needs no pilgrimage. Nor does it proselytize or support military aggression. To practise Seiza, one needs no group or leader, no visualization, vocalization, counting, or mantra repetition, and no special symbolic objects, apparatus, or clothing.

A video filmed at the Cambridge Unitarian Church introducing Seiza Meditation by Miki Nakura-sensei, a booklet called “Seiza: Quiet Sitting for Beginners,” and various other links to pieces about Okada-sensei at the following web address:

<https://andrewjbrown.blogspot.com/p/seiza-meditation.html>

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