

GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA

www.gedatsu-usa.org

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Our daily prayer and holy tea
blessings for ancestors and
all creation bring peace and
harmony into our homes."*

Our everyday life is possible due to the immeasurable blessings from many people and things around us.

Let's think about our present life. First of all, we are alive today. Our life is given by the Universal Life Force through our parents and ancestors. We receive everything we need to live, such as air, water, food, etc., from Nature and all creation in the universe.

Usually, we take these blessings for granted. We should remember that we are allowed to live by receiving immeasurable blessings from many people and everything in the universe. This awareness and sense of appreciation will bring peace and prosperity into our lives.

UPCOMING GEDATSU CHURCH ACTIVITIES

At this time, because transmission rates of COVID-19 remain high in our communities, our Gedatsu churches remain closed.

All regularly scheduled in-person services and activities – including in-person consultations, private blessings and services – are suspended until further notice. Ministers are always available to support members by phone, videoconferencing and other means.

- Our **Fall Grand Festival** in Sacramento will be conducted at the end of August by **Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe, Rev. Naoya Okano, Minister-in-training Mica Rodriguez** and **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito** – with no attendance by members.

The Festival services will be video-recorded and viewable on **Sunday, September 6, at 9:30 a.m. on YouTube**, enabling you to view and participate in the prayers and services from home. The services will include:

- **Ministers' prayers** at *Goreichi* shrines and monuments
- **Gochi Sanctuary prayer service** and video-recorded message by **Bishop Teruo Okano**
- **Gedatsu Memorial Tower service** for the enshrinement of new souls.
- A modified **Saito Goma Fire Ceremony**. No personal *Saito Goma* plaques will be thrown.
- **September "Never Forgotten" Memorial Services**
 - Both Sacramento and Los Angeles services will be video-recorded and viewable on **Sunday, September 13, at 10 a.m.** (See page 2 for details.)
- Annual **Autumn Moon Festival** fundraiser, scheduled for October in Los Angeles, is canceled.



Participate from Home in Online September “Never Forgotten” Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held monthly by the Gedatsu Church to honor the memory of those who have passed away during that particular month.

Because our churches are currently closed, our “Never Forgotten” services are conducted online, enabling you to participate by praying from home.

The services are video-recorded and viewable at the time of each service on the Gedatsu YouTube site: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIbbFt3XLUWin8_OGPmifGw. The videos will remain viewable from the date and time of each service.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, September 13, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Jeffrey Tellez, Robert Katsumi Fukushima, Soichi Nakatani, Masako Sakamoto Tagawa, Shigetaro Kino, Tetsuo Yomogida, Linda Carol Kashiwagi and Glenn Shuji Hatae.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, September 13, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **David H. Dyson Jr., Kazuko Endo, Ann M. Ghazarians, Nancy Kikuchi, Misako Kobata, Liam Mikael Kowal, Hitoshi Matsumoto, Yasuko Matsumoto, Frank S. Miyamura, Nancy Mizuki, Migiwa Nishi, Tomitaro Okada, Jacobus Johannes Reckers, Ruth Muriel Reckers, Kiyoshi George Sakuma, John Takeshi Sangen, Yuri T. Sangen, Hiroshi Sato, Setsu Shiroishi, Himeko Tanji, Itsuya Frank Tanji, Moto Tanji and Atsuko Watanabe.**

Obituary

Members of the Sacramento Spiritual Center mourn the loss of **Mark Alan Mullins** of Sammamish, Wash., who passed away on June 29 at the age of 56. Mark is survived by his wife, **Sherri**, and daughters **Sabrina, Danielle and Kaylee**, as well as Sherri's sister and brother, **Sally McSwain and Scott Taketa**. Mark and Sherri attended the Sacramento church and were dedicated Bazaar volunteers.

Now . . . Donate Online!

Your Gedatsu Church is pleased to offer you a new way to donate that is convenient, easy and secure. Donations can now be made online – from your home or workplace – on your laptop, tablet or cellphone.

You have the option of donating by credit card or ACH/bank payments, making one-time gifts or recurring payments, designating general or special offerings and lots more. Email and printable receipts are automatically generated. You can pay your membership dues, too, by going to the Members page on the site.

Just go to the Give page on the church website at www.gedatsu-usa.org to get started.

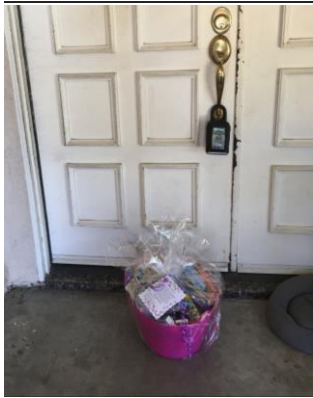


Continuous Caring for Our Holy Grounds



Maintenance work, under the supervision of John Horner, continues year-round on the **Goreichi Holy Grounds** in Sacramento. In July, seven dead trees were removed, including a large pine tree in front of the Gedatsu Memorial Tower. A temporary wooden structure was built to protect the stone lantern.

AROUND OUR CHURCH



L.A. Church Delivers Kindness and Caring with “Thinking of You” Baskets

Members of the Los Angeles Regional Board wanted to make sure that the church was reaching out to and supporting its most vulnerable members during the pandemic: elderly members age 80+ and those living alone or with few contacts. After identifying 16 such members, the group, headed by **Mark Ishida**, board co-chair, quickly set to work gathering monetary donations, suggesting and shopping for items – everything from hand sanitizers, face masks and a variety of easy-to-prepare food items and snacks – and assembling the baskets. Within two weeks, the baskets were delivered to 16 very surprised, appreciative and “overjoyed” members. Said one basket recipient: “I’ve never received anything like this before! I am very grateful to the Gedatsu Church. Thank you all so much.”

The L.A. Church follows a tradition of helping those in need. For the past two years, members have donated funds to purchase back-to-school and holiday gifts for Maryvale, a local home for abused and neglected children and teens. When the regional board was notified that Maryvale was closing its doors indefinitely, board members focused their charitable energies on its “Thinking of You” baskets. “Even though COVID is the worst thing we’ve experienced,” says Mark, “God has helped us all see the good in everyday generosity.”

In photos, left to right, a variety of items were purchased and assembled for the gift baskets. Senior Deacon Jackson Ito, Rev. Naoya Okano, Mark Ishida and grandson, Hiro, delivered the baskets. Recipients were contacted before delivery, and baskets were left on their doorsteps or handed to them with a “Thinking of You” card. Two of the recipients were residents of nursing facilities.

JULY 2020 DONATIONS

Northern California

Total Donations \$1,860

General Donations: Steve/Shelly Haas, Andrea Cool, June Tanaka, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, Saeko Nishino, M/M J. Horner, M/M K. Yamada, M/M A. Kishida

Special Acknowledgments

Dave Ide: Appreciation for retirement from work

Dave Ide: Appreciation for Penny’s new car

Dave/Penny Ide: Appreciation for Courtney’s graduation from California State University Sacramento

Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe: *Saito Goma* appreciation \$1,000

(Note: Special Acknowledgment gifts \$100+ are listed. Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+.)

Southern California

Total Donations \$4,275

General Donations: M/M F. Barthel, M/M K. Chinen, C. Chu, K. Fujii, M/M B. Hamamoto, T. Ishida, J. Ito, J. Kaku, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M S. Mizokami, M/M P. Reid, M/M N. Okano, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Okimura, D. Shiroishi, Anonymous

Special Acknowledgments

Victor/Marian Mizokami: Appreciation for grandchildren’s graduations

Tak/Teiko Fukushima: Car blessing

Yen Wen Peng: Ancestor and property blessing

Toyoko Murakami: “Never Forgotten” service

J./P. Reid: “Never Forgotten” for Eddie / Nancy Ogura

Gedatsu Q&A – 3

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *What is the purpose of making an offering to the altar?*

A We make an offering as an expression of our respect and appreciation to the very source of our life: Universal Life Force, guardian angels, and ancestors.



Usually we offer water, holy tea, rice, salt, *sake* wine, vegetables, fruits, flowers, etc.

Water and salt are essential for human existence. Rice was the main food for Japanese people. Wine was regarded as a sacred drink. Therefore, by making an offering of these things, we express appreciation and gratitude for being nurtured by taking these things.

But it is not necessary to be fixed on these specific items to offer. You may offer anything you want to the altar as a token of appreciation. The important thing is your heart of sincere appreciation and gratitude. It is good to offer a small plate of your meal to the altar before you consume it.

Q *Why do we give daily prayers?*

A It is common for people to pray for family safety, successful business, recovery from illness, etc. This is quite natural for human beings. But it is important to understand the significance of prayer.

The essence of prayer is appreciation and gratitude. You should be aware of this.

When you pray, first of all, you express sincere gratitude to the Universal Life Force, guardian angels and ancestors for being allowed to live each day. You will then pray for guidance and protection.

If you sincerely give prayers this way each day, you will be guided appropriately and be able to attain peace and happiness in life.

Q *What should I say in my daily prayers?*

A As mentioned above, the essence of prayer is appreciation and gratitude.

In our daily prayers, first of all, we express sincere gratitude to the source of our life: the Universal Life Force, guardian angels, and ancestors. This is because our existence is possible totally due to their blessings.

(Continued on page 5)

(Gedatsu Q&A – continued from page 4)

The following Gedatsu Prayer contains all the essential elements we should say in our daily prayers.

Let us put our hands together in prayer.

*We join in giving reverence to the
Universal Life Force, all guardian angels
and the souls of our ancestors.*

*We give thanks for the infinite blessings
we receive.*

*We resolve to live each day with
appreciation and gratitude.*

Aspiration

*May peace reign over the world and all people
enjoy prosperity and happiness.*

*May we unite and cooperate in the
salvation of mankind.*

*May we pray for the peaceful rest of all spirits.
And may divine grace bless all things equally.*

Appreciation and Gratitude

*I shall reciprocate the profound and
immeasurable blessings I receive from
my country . . . my parents . . . my teachers . . .
society . . . and all creation in the universe.*

Supplication

*With respectful and sincere hearts, we dedicate
ourselves to the practice of Gedatsu.*

*We ask Master Gedatsu Kongo to guide us
as we follow his example to live
with appreciation and gratitude
and to be of service to all.*

Homage to our Founder Master Gedatsu Kongo
Namu Gedatsu Kongo (seven times)



Foreword to *Shinko*

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Starting on the following page, we are about to read *Shinko*, or “Sincere Practice,” one of **Founder Gedatsu Kongo’s** most important works. When it was originally published in 1942 as a 30-page pocket-sized book, the Founder told his followers to continuously read and re-read it “until you fully understand its meaning.”

Its title, *Shinko*, is the Founder’s unique coinage, consisting of two *kanji* characters: 真 *shin*, which means true, or sincere, and 行 *ko*, which means practice, or action. Therefore, this title means “sincere practice,” “true action,” or “practice of truth.” Interestingly, another Japanese word with the same pronunciation is more commonly understood as “religious faith.” This word also consists of two characters: 信 *shin*, which means to believe, and 仰 *ko*, which means to revere. Therefore, its meaning is to believe and trust in something greater beyond oneself.

Thus, by using the word *shinko*, which has a single pronunciation but different meanings, Gedatsu Kongo expressed his religious outlook: “Religious study should not be only a theory. Rather, your religious belief should be expressed as your sincere practice in daily life.”

Gedatsu Kongo’s primary motivation in writing this book was to explain why religion is necessary in human life. Gedatsu is to believe deeply in your innermost self, which is divine, follow your divine nature, and at the same time, endeavor in your daily tasks.

I hope you will read this book without any preconceptions about religion. You will then be aware of the true meaning of religious life.

Editor’s Note: The *Gedatsu Companion* published *Shinko* in serial form in 2014-15. We republish it again in the hope that you will find renewed meaning and relevance in the Founder’s words.

[This work was translated by Rev. Taki with reference to the translation of *Shinko* by the late **Rev. Arthur Sakamoto**.]



SHINKO (Sincere Practice) **By Gedatsu Kongo**

The Significance of Religious Life

Religious life is, in brief, one's communion with the Divine Spirit – existing in accordance with Divine Will. Whether I say "oneness with" or "belief in God," religious life pertains to a life of interchange between God and humans. It means to always revere God and appreciate the Divine blessing, to live each day under Divine guidance. From the daily life of the individual to the administration of a country, humans must not deviate from but, rather, embrace the Divine Will.

No matter how far human intelligence may have advanced, compared with the mysteries of the universe, it is but a drop in the ocean. Human intelligence is no more than a speck of the Divine Wisdom.

Scientists, at times, claim to have conquered Nature. But, in fact, they have only been allowed to take advantage of and utilize Natural Law. The individual who does not know God is the same as one who is blind. There is nothing more precarious than blind subsistence or government.

The past transgressions of humans, the tribulations of societies and nations, and the disturbances of the world are all the consequences of having become detached from God. Reverting to God is an absolute necessity.

Human life is a spiritual offshoot of God. We are allowed to live by God. Just as our physical being exists in accordance with the universal phenomena, our hearts and minds must also exist in harmony with God. Herein lies the basic law: We cannot, even for a second, be separated from God.

Therefore, the fundamental path of human life is to be conscious of God, to communicate with God, and to live according to the Divine Will.

(To be continued next month)

Photo: Gedatsu Kongo seated in a member's home in a rural prefecture in Japan. The hanging scroll to his right, written by the Founder, reads "Dainichi Nyorai" – meaning "great sun," source of all life.

Hidden Pride – A Member’s Experience

By Senior Reverend Akira Sebe

In our Gedatsu study, all of us are students and can learn from each other. I'd like to share the experience of a Gedatsu member from Japan named **Aiko Yagi**. Through the practice of *baka no keiko**, the practice of humility, Aiko was able to have an amazing experience, in which she received personal guidance from **Master Gedatsu Kongo**.

Aiko is 78 years old and lives in Oita, Kyushu in southern Japan. When her husband was only 45, he passed away, leaving her to raise their two children on her own. Not knowing what to do, she used her skills as a bread maker and opened up a tiny bakery in her home.

Her son suffered from a psychological disorder, which caused him to be extremely violent, to the point that he would throw things in their home, hit and kick the walls and even strike his mother. His outbursts were so severe, they attracted the attention of their neighbors. He was frequently in and out of mental hospitals for many years, and the police advised Aiko to have him institutionalized.

Seeking help for her son, Aiko made monthly trips to fly 480 miles north to the Gedatsu *Goreichi* in Saitama – an expensive trip on her small income. Each time, she would leave early in the morning – leaving her son in the care of her daughter – and return late at night.

The Master’s Message

Aiko's single purpose in visiting *Goreichi* was to help her son. On one visit, after a year of making the costly trip to Saitama, she heard the voice of Gedatsu Kongo. He spoke in a crystal-clear tone, saying to her, "Your husband has been working hard." That was all he said. I believe that Gedatsu Kongo's brief message meant that her husband was working hard with her from the spiritual realm.

Aiko had another experience, in which she dreamed that her husband was sitting on the floor next to Gedatsu Kongo. He was scratching his head many times, as if he were learning from Gedatsu Kongo.

Aiko was uplifted by both of these experiences, which strengthened her resolve and spirituality.

Kneeling, Keeping “Her Head Down”

When she describes her personal study during those difficult years, Aiko points out the constant, continual effort she made to “keep her head down” – that is, to swallow her self-pride and abolish her greed for self-recognition. By literally kneeling before the Universal God and touching her forehead to the stony ground, after many years, she was able to practice true humility in both form and spirit. It was the only way, she said, that she could spiritually enlighten her life.

* *Baka to bimbo to shi no keiko* – to practice humility, poverty and death – is one of Master Gedatsu Kongo's key philosophical teachings. He taught us to shun false pride and practice humility.



Aiko Yagi is seated in center between her son, Hiroki Yagi, and daughter, Eriko Kitajima. Standing, from left, are grandsons, Kairi and Rikuto Kitajima, and son-in-law, Rikiya Kitajima.

(Continued on back page)



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Irene Long** of the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church. Irene lives with her husband in Orange County and works for a credit union. The daughter of long-time member, **Teruko Nakamura**, and younger sister of **Marylin Nakamura**, Irene has been in Gedatsu since middle school.

In her spare time, Irene enjoys cooking and doing yoga.

Joyce Reid, Editor

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(Hidden Pride – continued from page 7)

Today, after 35 years, Aiko gladly shares her story with others so that they can benefit from her experience. Many have learned from and appreciate her efforts. Her son now works and receives a modest income. He drives, shops, enjoys his work and appreciates his job – things he was unable to do earlier in his life.

Six years ago, Aiko established a Gedatsu branch in her home and began attracting a continuing stream of new members. They were touched and inspired by her experiences with her son's mental illness, which offered them great hope to overcome their own problems.

I am very impressed with Aiko's dedication and sincerity. When I speak to her, I sense that all vanity, anger, pride, and self-centeredness are gone from her. I believe she has practiced real humility – *baka no keiko* – which is the most difficult Gedatsu study to perform. She reached a supreme state of humbleness that is inspiring. I believe that Gedatsu Kongo recognized and guided her because of her sincerity and hard work.

We can appreciate Aiko's study because it relates to real problems we encounter in our own lives. I sincerely believe that Gedatsu followers who dedicate themselves, like Aiko, to the practice of humility – by striving to eliminate pride, self-conceit and stubbornness – will also be able to open their souls to receive divine guidance and attain happiness.

