

GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
www.gedatsu-usa.org

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Our inner light represents
who we really are."*

One's true self cannot be hidden. When you meet someone for the first time, you might be deceived by your initial impression for some time. But as you get to know the person better, you begin to see the real person.

Master Gedatsu Kongo said, "Your thoughts will be expressed as your speech, and then, as your attitude."

You cannot hide your true self. Your sincerity will be definitely perceptible to others. Therefore, instead of glossing over things, you should always try to be as genuine as possible.

This is the basic foundation to develop a trusting relationship with others.



UPDATE ON GEDATSU CHURCH ACTIVITIES

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

All regularly scheduled in-person services and activities are suspended until further notice. Ministers are always available to support members by phone, videoconferencing and other means for private consultations, family blessings and memorial services. Contact your local church for further information.



Top photo: Fall foliage on the Holy Grounds of the Gedatsu Spiritual Center.

Bottom photo: Even though this year's Fall Grand Festival – including the *Saitogoma* Fire Ceremony – were scaled back because of the pandemic, members were able to "participate" in the Festival via video recordings of the services. See page 3 for story and photos.



Participate from Home in Online October “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.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, October 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Kazuko Nakayama, Shane Holland, Yasuichi Sebe, Clarence Aiona, Sadako Taketa, Yoshi Tanaka, Motoji Ide and Shinji Kobayashi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, October 11, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Teruko Arakawa, Richard Hiroshi Kikuchi, Tomiko Konishi, Suzuko Mallek, Mariko Michiuye, Kiyoko Nagahama, Kazuya Nagura, Hiroshi Nakaguchi, Shizuya Nakaguchi, Hen Kim Nghe, Peggy Ogawa, Takashi Okazaki, Toki Kotake Shiroishi, Harumi Tanji, Tsugio Tanji, Robert Toshiaki Tomita and Mariko Maria Tsuruta.**



Gedatsu Memorial Tower Enshrinement

As part of this year’s Fall Grand Festival programs, the annual enshrinement ceremony was held in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower. The following souls were enshrined:

Henry Calderon, Nestor Gonzalez-Buenahora, Tsuneko Johnson and Roy Akio Nakatani.

Because Festival attendance was restricted, the memorial prayer will be repeated at a later date so that family members of the deceased souls and church members may fully participate.

Order Your Holy Tea Plaques Now

Your *Amacha* holy tea plaques should be replaced at the beginning of each year. To have new plaques by New Year 2021, complete the order form inserted in this newsletter and mail it as soon as possible to your local church with your check for payment.

Renew Your Church Membership for 2021

Now is the time to renew our membership dues for 2021.

Annual Membership: Renewable annually

Individual \$45

Family \$70

Lifetime Membership: Pay your membership dues just once, instead of paying annually

Individual \$450

Family \$600

Pay Online or by Mail

- To pay online – by credit card or ACH/bank payment – go to the Membership page on the church website at www.gedatsu-usa.
- Or mail your check – made payable to Gedatsu Church USA – to your nearest church branch.

Year-End Membership Roster – Any Changes?

If you moved, changed your phone number, added or changed your email address, be sure to advise **Rev.**

Naoya Okano at the L.A. Church so that your correct information is published in the 2021 “Seasons Greetings” Membership Roster.

We especially want your current email address, so we can send you the latest church communications, special email bulletins and announcements. All changes must be received by December 1. You can email Rev. Naoya at naoya_okano@gedatsu-usa.org, call at (626) 288-1212, or text at (626) 233-2359.

Obituary

L.A. Church mourns the loss of **Margaret Masako Oyanagi**, who passed away on August 15 at the age of 96. She is survived by her husband, **Tomoki Oyanagi**; daughters, **Julie (Donald) Mah** and **Harriet (Dana) Shioiji**; sons, **Larry (Susan) Yuzuki** and **Dale (Momo) Yuzuki**; brother, **Leo (Mae) Yamanaka**; and seven grandchildren.

Sacramento Spiritual Center sadly reports the loss of long-time member, **Mary Harada**, who passed away on August 24 at the age of 96. She is survived by her husband, **Dan**, and sons, **David** and **Wayne**, and daughter-in-law, **Raquel**.



Small Scale, Great Impact

Fall Grand Festival 2020

Thanks to the careful planning, organization and efforts of our ministers and a small crew of dedicated, hardworking members, our church was able to observe our Fall Festival this year.

Despite significant scale-back and the challenges of health protocols, the services were expertly conducted and conveyed to members via video recordings, resulting in a Festival that was spiritually moving and impressive in its simplicity and sincerity.

We thank the members of the Festival support crew, who each assumed multiple tasks in preparing for and executing programs:

- Service officiants: **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe, Reverend Naoya Okano, Minister-in-training, Mica Rodriguez, Senior Deacon, Jackson Ito**
- Program I m.c.: **Joy Sebe**
- Program II m.c.: **Jackson Ito**
- Program III plaque bearer and fire attendant: **Jackson Ito**. Officiant attendant: **Pop Vargas**
- Fire preparation: **Scott Taketa**
- Camera and audio-visual support: **Jason Detwiler, Rev. Naoya, Scott Taketa, Pop and Ami Vargas, Nathan and Noah Sebe** (Ami, Pop, Jason, Nathan and Noah are shown at left)
- Film editing: **Rev. Naoya, Jason Detwiler**
- Grounds preparation: **John Horner, Dave Ide, Pop Vargas**
- Preparation of offerings: **Sebe family**

To view the three-part Fall Festival programs, go to the Gedatsu Church official YouTube site.



Fall Grand Festival 2020 Address by Bishop Teruo Okano*

Hello. How are you? I hope that this message finds you well.

Unfortunately, like the Spring Grand Festival, attendance at the Fall Festival is limited to only ministers and a few members, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

As I said in my video in April, COVID-19 is the result of negative vibrations caused by deep-seated feelings of resentment held by spirits of those who were unfairly treated and brutally killed.

While this may be difficult for some to believe, history often records the outbreak of an infectious disease or epidemic in a region following war or invasion. That is why memorials are erected at such places to commemorate and console the lost souls.

In Gedatsu, we collectively call spirits that create such infectious diseases “Unrested Souls and Spirits of the Universe.” Disasters – such as plane crashes, train and boating accidents, and epidemics – result in these places, which are filled with these unrested spirits.

The same is true in our homes. When family members continually feud, the atmosphere within the home becomes negatively charged, making even visitors feel strangely uneasy. That is because the negative vibrations create mental disturbances and generate conflicts. Over time, this negative energy can build and erupt into interpersonal disputes and accidents.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created fear in people throughout the world, giving rise to crime, civil unrest and suffering. They are receiving the vibration of unrested spirits of the universe.

This is similar to our receiving music over radio waves. To avoid receiving negative vibrations, which may make us susceptible to the coronavirus, we need to attune ourselves to a higher frequency by calming our minds with positive thoughts.

We must acknowledge that our lives are God-given. We need to practice meditation and holy tea blessing and pray to God that our fellow humans throughout the world will overcome this ordeal.

***Although the pandemic presents us
with great challenges, it also offers
an opportunity for us to improve.***

This pandemic comes at a time of huge worldwide changes. Although the pandemic presents us with great challenges, it also offers an opportunity for us to improve.

As humans, we are not perfect. Although some may panic under this extreme situation, remember that God never abandons us. God is ever present, always protecting us.

In addition, Master Gedatsu Kongo surely guides us to reach a state of enlightenment – a divine “world of souls” that transcends human knowledge, ego and intellect. So, let us chant “homage to our founder Gedatsu Kongo” in our minds wherever we are. I’m sure that our minds and souls will be blessed with the Master’s great energy.

I truly wish you happiness. Thank you very much.



* A video recording of this address by Bishop Okano (in Japanese, subtitled in English) is viewable on the Gedatsu YouTube site.

Gedatsu Q&A – 4

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *What is the Amacha holy tea blessing?*

A One of the unique, sacred practices of the Gedatsu Church is the performance of *Amacha* holy tea blessing, or *kuyo*, in which we dedicate our sincere prayers and service to the peaceful repose of the souls of the deceased and express gratitude to the spirits. We accomplish this by pouring *Amacha* holy tea over memorial tablets or stupa, on which souls are invited to receive the blessing. The performance of *Amacha* blessing is a central practice in our daily prayers – not only to purify deceased souls, but as a means to purify our own minds, souls and bodies.

The miraculous ability of *Amacha* blessing to bring relief to suffering souls and purify negative karma results from the combination of three essential elements: the power of the holy *Goho*, the intrinsic qualities of *Amacha* holy tea and the performer's sincerity and faith.

The term *Goho*, as used in the Gedatsu doctrine, contains no less than the dynamic concentration of cosmic forces: the infinite and inexhaustible Universal Life Force, or God, and the representation of its activities. These forces are symbolized in the combination of five Sanskrit characters – representing five aspects of universal wisdom or enlightenment – which were written by Gedatsu Kongo, while in a state of divine revelation. Thus, activated with the Founder's spiritual power, they are inscribed on prayer plaques and stupa and on holy amulets issued by the church. The dynamic power of the Holy *Goho* dissolves negative karma and ignorance. It effects spiritual purification of the individual, renders salvation to the unrested spirits and frees humankind from its sufferings.

Our *Amacha* tea is derived from the *Amacha* plant, grown and harvested in Japan. The term *Amacha* is commonly translated as "sweet tea," because the tea contains a natural sweetener that is many times sweeter than table sugar. Instead of "sweet tea," however, the Gedatsu Church writes *Amacha* as "heavenly" or "holy" tea in the belief that it is conferred by God for holy purposes. *Amacha* leaves have been used as herbs and for medicinal purposes since the Middle Ages. They are believed to improve the condition of the body organs and purify the blood.

Amacha blessing can be done by anyone, even young children. Yet, while simple to perform, the blessing is profound in its effect. When done with complete sincerity and faith, *Amacha* blessing can bring peace and salvation for unrested spirits, no matter how dire their suffering.

Q11 *How should I practice Gedatsu if I have no altar or holy tea blessing plaques in my home?*

A Master Gedatsu Kongo stated:

"The Universal God is present when and wherever sincere prayer is offered."

"If you come in search, you may perceive that God exists everywhere. In the Universe, which God commands and governs, there is no reason for God not to permeate."

Actually, God, or the Universal Life Force, and ancestor spirits are not limited to certain places, such as churches, shrines, altars, sacred symbols, etc., but they are always present everywhere.

(Continued on back page)

SHINKO (Sincere Practice)

By Gedatsu Kongo

Practice of Sincerity

When one has reached the state of sincerity, it can be said that one has come in contact with the essence of God.

For example, when one encounters extreme hardships and acutely feels the inadequacies of human power . . . or when one faces a life-or-death situation, having exhausted all human resources . . . one then resigns oneself to fate or passively beseeches God's aid. At such times, one is conscious of God.

Furthermore, in society, when we come in contact with miraculous or mysterious phenomena beyond comprehension, we wonder if these are evidence of so-called divine providence. Actually, there are many instances when one is astonished at encountering strange spiritual phenomena, which confound human intellect and common sense. These must be labeled miraculous or mysterious. To have these experiences provides the opportunity to be spiritually awakened and to know God – the first step toward religious faith.

If one persists on relying on one's own abilities, being arrogant and presumptuous, or dim-witted and apathetic, there is no deliverance. Such people must be considered eternally spiritually blind, wandering aimlessly and confused, progressing along a dangerous and reckless course of life.

At an age when the world is undergoing grave and critical changes, humans should awaken spiritually, or they will likely forfeit the opportunity forever.

The object of worship must be precise. If you toy with vague concepts such as gods or deities, you will not be able to grasp it. Or if you are involved in false spiritual entities, which are without any kind of lineage or organization, there is a danger of being led astray.

All beings on earth – including humans, of course – must observe the authority of the Supreme God of the Universe, live in conformance with that authority and render service. Humankind's singular mission is to realize this Divine Will on earth. In a sense, humans are descendants of the Supreme God.

Although I may say gods and deities under the authority of the Supreme God, the concept is so expansive and vague that one will find it difficult to comprehend. But the universe in its entirety is the manifestation of God, and God resides in the interior of all things. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to regard all things as Divine Beings, and express profound respect. This attitude is the beginning of religious faith.

All beings have the same root, God. Even a mountain, river, tree, grass, man or beast – all have their respective presiding deity, who is under the authority of God, Commander of the Universe. One must, first of all, clearly become aware of the diverse and complex universal phenomena and the organization of the higher realms of the spiritual world. Thereafter, each person, regardless of his or her faith, should earnestly strive to follow the correct path toward the central Supreme God.

(To be continued next month)

AUGUST 2020 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$11,300

General Donations: M/M Buster Ide, J. Detwiler/J.Sebe,
M/M K. Yamada, M/M J. Horner

Special Acknowledgments

M/M K. Kuritani Appreciation for Fall Festival
M/M Okano “
M. Rodriguez “
D. Harada “
Sebe Family “ (\$500)
M/M Tsuboi Appreciation for guidance
M/M K. Yamada Appreciation for 10 years of service
(\$10,000 – profits from investment for
special projects of Gedatsu Church USA)

Southern California Total: \$4,113

General: M/M T. Hiram, J. Kaku, M/M B. Kim, M. Kimura,
M/M K. Kuritani, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami,
M. Nakamura, T. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano,
A. Okimura, S. Okimura, F. Sueyoshi, M/M H. Tsujimura,
M/M R. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

M. Okada “Never Forgotten” for Toku Nishi
T. Ishida “ for Shige Ishida
M/M V. Mizokami “
Do. Shiroishi “ for Shizuye Shiroishi/Shige Ishida
Sherrie Chodor “ “
F. Sueyoshi “ for Nora Toguchi
Y. Oishi “
T. Murakami “ for Tomoe Toyama
T. Yamada Company stability (\$1,000)
T. Yamada Saito Goma appreciation
J. Kaku Goshimpo appreciation
J. Mah Appreciation for “pillow service” for
Masako Oyanagi
A. Okimura Goshimpo appreciation
C. Barthel 7-year memorial service for Joe Takara

Online Donations: Total: \$1,346

General: N. Tsuboi, H. Tsujimura, M/M P. Reid, D. Allum,
D. Mukai

Special Acknowledgments

D. Ide Appreciation for Benzaiten service
T. Hamada “Never Forgotten” for Nora Ayako Toguchi
A. Yokota Ancestor blessing
T/R Shimatsu “Never Forgotten” for Masato, Teruko,
Eugene Shimatsu, Theresa/Karen Martin
D. Mukai “Never Forgotten” for Misako Kubata

MEMBER SHARE AND CARE

As a Gedatsu member, you are part of a caring community that celebrates your joys and supports you when you are in need. If you would like supportive prayers from fellow members when you face health issues or difficult times, let us know. Or if you just want to share some happy news, let us know that, too.



L.A. Church member **Arlene Okimura** has begun a six-month chemotherapy program – three times a week, every three weeks – to treat neuroendocrine cancer, which was diagnosed in late July. Arlene believes in the positive energy and support from others. So, please be a part of her “prayer circle” by sending Arlene positive thoughts, prayers and wishes for her recovery.



Another L.A. Church member, **Paul Nakamura**, who contracted COVID-19 in July, continues to recover and gain strength. He now “feels fine” after returning home in August from the hospital, where he spent a number of days in the ICU. He thanks members for their prayers for his recovery.



In Portland, Oregon, member **Lori Tsujimura**, who underwent chemotherapy, surgery and radiation treatments for breast cancer several years ago, continues to improve through her recovery process. She reports she is “doing fine and looking forward to each day.”

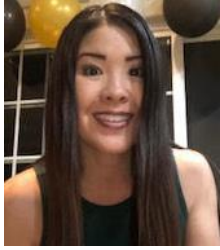
And finally . . . these thoughts from **Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe** on how to pray for a loved one’s recovery from illness.

“Instead of just praying for one’s quick recovery, we should express appreciation to the doctors and nurses, to the inventors of medical equipment, to the workers who made, sold and delivered that equipment, to the Universal Life Force, ancestors and guardian angels, to the foods that sustain health and support the immune system.

“This is the way of expressing appreciation in our daily lives that Gedatsu Kongo taught us.”

Note re Donations:

*Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+
Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+*



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Karen Kim** of the L.A. Gedatsu Church. She and her husband, **Brad**, live in Cypress with their son, **Justin** (17), and daughter, **Kayla** (14). Karen is the daughter of members, **Victor** and **Marian Mizokami**, and the

granddaughter of the late **Tomiko Mizokami**, Gedatsu Church pioneer.

Karen is a first-grade Dual Immersion teacher, who is “passionate about helping young children develop socially, emotionally and academically.” In her spare time, she enjoys Zumba, yoga and attending sports/dance events. “Gedatsu has taught me to appreciate every aspect of my daily life,” says Karen, “and the importance of gratitude, which I continue to pass on to my children and students.”

Joyce Reid, Editor

Kiyoko Hirayama, Arlene Okimura, Photographers

Editorial contributors to this issue:

Karen Kim, Rev. Naoya Okano, Arlene Okimura, Paul Nakamura, Minister-trainee Mica Rodriguez, Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe, Rev. Hisakazu Taki, Lori Tsujimura

(Gedatsu Q&A – continued from page 5)

Therefore, if you can always offer sincere prayers, it is not necessary to have an altar and holy tea blessing plaques in your home. The question is your sincerity. Do you think you are always sincere enough when you pray? Intellectually, we can understand the importance of sincerity. But actually, it is very hard for us to be always sincere.

Consider one’s diet, for example. Everyone knows that being overweight is not good for one’s health, but it is difficult for a big eater to lose weight. The same goes for heavy smokers or drinkers, too. It is difficult to put into practice what we believe because of the strong habitual tendencies within us. We need actual daily practice to transform these habitual tendencies within us. This is why all religions emphasize the importance of practice and discipline, such as prayer, meditation, etc.

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Think of your home altar as a visible “reminder” of your respect and appreciation to the Universal Life Force and ancestors. When you sit in front of the altar, you will naturally have a feeling of reverence.

I strongly encourage you to create a positive, supportive environment in your home by having an altar and holy tea blessing plaques. But don’t mistake this as the goal for your Gedatsu study.

The aim of our Gedatsu study is to live a life of appreciation. Gedatsu is a simple path to live. The only question is how sincerely we can live each day with appreciation and gratitude.

