

GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA

www.gedatsu-usa.org

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UPDATE ON GEDATSU CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"True love is,
in a word, sincerity."*

"Love" often refers to marital love, parental love, love between a man and a woman, etc.

In many cases, it implies an egoistic kind of love that expects something in return.

Sometimes feelings of anger develop between husband and wife, or between parents and child because the other person rebels against them. This kind of selfish, conditional love can't be called true love.

What, then, is true love?

Just as the sun shines upon everything on earth equally and unconditionally, true love should nurture everything equally without expecting anything in return.

How can we love others in that way? That is the question that we should strive to answer.

At this time, because of COVID-19, our Gedatsu churches remain closed, and all regularly scheduled in-person services and activities are suspended until further notice.

Although we are unable to assemble as usual, our church offers members a number of ways to stay connected with our Gedatsu faith and activities through online YouTube videos, live-streaming events and Zoom video-conferencing sessions. For example:

- November "Never Forgotten" Services (see page 2)
- 7-5-3 *Shichi Go San* Children's Ceremonies (see page 3)
- Weekly Online Prayer Sessions (see page 3)
- Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Service (watch for upcoming video)
- Upcoming programs and activities, announced in *IN TOUCH* and other email bulletins

Ministers are always available to support members and friends by phone, videoconferencing and other means for private consultations, family blessings and memorial services. To arrange a family memorial or ancestor service, contact your local church:

- Los Angeles Church: **Rev. Naoya Okano** (626) 288-1212
naoya_okano@gedatsu-usa.org
- Sacramento Spiritual Center: **Ms. Mica Rodriguez** (916) 363-6054
gedatsuchurchsac@gmail.com

The officers, ministers and staff of Gedatsu Church extend their warmest wishes to members, family and friends for a happy, safe and loving Thanksgiving holiday.



November “Never Forgotten” Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held monthly at 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 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, November 1, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Dorothy Tomita, Harold Horner, Henry Calderon, Toshiko Kushuhara, George Akiyoshi, Yasuno Niiguma Tsuboi, Hirohide Obu, Kaoru Ide Kotabe, Maio Kino, Tracy T. Takahashi and Sho Akira Wakabayashi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, November 8, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Ibo Roque Chaves, George Imuta, Ikuko Inoue, Seiji Inoue, Fumio Ishida, Hitoshi Ishida, Seitaro Kawamura, Fude Kikuta, Masaji George Kikuta, Ken Kimura, Tomio Kubo, Patsy M. Matsumoto, Robert Miyamoto, George Joroshi Miyasako, Harukichi Miyazaki, Masao Roy Mizokami, Kiyoko Mochida, Yukimi Mochida, Emiko Okimura, Manabu Okimura, Nami Sakuma, Teruko Shimatsu, John Nobuyuki Tanji, Dorothy KiyokoTomita and Henry Urada.**

Obituaries

The Los Angeles Gedatsu Church mourns the passing of two long-time members.

Hiroko Omiya passed away peacefully on July 17 at the age of 96. She is survived by her daughter-in-law, **Tatsuko Tanno**, and grandchildren, **Nobuko and Aiko Tanno, Tara Bussey, and William Kelgard.** Her funeral and burial services were held privately on September 18.

Tomoki Oyanagi passed away on September 21 at the age of 99, just one month after the passing of his late wife, **Margaret Masako Oyanagi.** He is survived by his daughters, **Julie (Donald) Mah and Harriet (Dana) Shioiji;** sons, **Larry (Susan) Yuzuki and Dale (Momo) Yuzuki;** brother, **Leo (Mae) Yamanaka;** and seven grandchildren.

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 Members 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’ve moved, changed your phone number, or added or changed your email address, be sure to advise **Rev. Naoya Okano** at the L.A. Church so that your correct information can be published in the 2021 “Seasons Greetings” Membership Roster.

We especially want your current email address, so that 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.

Donate to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

The Gedatsu Church encourages you to become a donor to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund, which allows members to demonstrate a higher level of commitment, appreciation and support for the church. Participation in the Fund requires an annual pledge of \$600 a year, which is in addition to the general membership dues. This \$600 may be paid in a single lump sum; two biannual payments of \$300; or 12 monthly installments of \$50. Donations to the Fund are tax deductible.

If you would like to support the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund, complete and submit the application form that is available at your local church office. A list of donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund is published annually in the *Gedatsu Companion*.

Join Our Wednesday Evening Prayer Sessions

Each Wednesday evening, you're invited to join in a simple online prayer service, led by **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe**. The 20-minute sessions are held at 8 p.m. (Pacific Time) via Zoom videoconferencing or phone.

Once participants have joined in (via internet or phone), Rev. Sebe leads the group in chanting the Heart Sutra three times. The informal sessions start with friendly "hellos" and check-ins and end with well-wishes and "goodbyes." You'll enjoy hearing and seeing familiar voices and faces and gathering together in prayer.

If you would like to participate in the prayer session, simply follow these instructions:

Via computer:

- First-time Zoom users:
 - Go to: zoom.us
 - Click on "Join a Meeting"
 - Enter 891 8263 5066
- If you have used Zoom before:
 - Go to:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89182635066>
 - Locate the Mute button and be prepared to press it when asked.

Via phone:

- Dial (408) 638-0968
- Enter 891 8263 5066
- Locate the Mute button and be prepared to press it when asked.

Those who are unfamiliar with Zoom or would like technical support are encouraged to call in prior to the session – from 7:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. – so that instructions and assistance can be provided.

Sr. Rev. Sebe suggests that prayer participants prepare for the session with this attitude:

"With our prayers, we are not asking for help. We are expressing appreciation.

"I take a walk every day. It is like a walking meditation. As I walk, I breathe in and out naturally, aware that the air comes in without any effort on my part. Air is divine. This is Gedatsu Kongo's teaching."

If you have any questions concerning the prayer session, contact **Joy Sebe** at joysebe@gmail.com or (510) 205-6602.



Families Celebrate, Give Thanks for Their Children in 7-5-3 Ceremonies

On Sunday, November 15, the L.A. Gedatsu Church will observe the 7-5-3 *Shicho-Go-San* Festival, the traditional Japanese festival that celebrates the well-being and healthy future of children – ages seven, five and three – by giving thanks to God for their divine protection and guidance.

If you have children, grandchildren, nieces and/or nephews who are seven, five or three years old, we invite you to participate in this joyful celebration of children.

The outdoor celebration consists of a special appreciation prayer, which will be conducted by **Rev. Naoya Okano** in front of the *Ujigami* shrine. To safeguard the health of all participants, individual prayer services for each family will be scheduled at 15-minute intervals, and all health protocols (social distancing, facemasks, temperature checks, sanitation, etc.) will be in place.

If you would like to have your child(ren) participate in this Festival, complete and submit an application form to the L.A. Church no later than November 5.

For an application form or more information, contact Rev. Naoya at (626) 233-2359 or naoya_okano@gedatsu-usa.org

Renew Your Holy Paper Plaques

Gedatsu Kongo left us a number of paper plaques for placement throughout the home for the protection of our dwellings and happiness of its inhabitants. (See **Rev. H. Taki's** explanation of these plaques on the back page.)

The new year is the time to renew your holy paper plaques. See your local church branch for details on types of plaques and prices.

Gedatsu Q&A – Part 5

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *Why is it important to recognize and appreciate our ancestors?*

A We were born from our parents, and our parents were born from their parents. When we retrace the past like this, the origin of our existence will go back to prehistoric days.

Our parents gave birth to and reared us. Please think of everything they have been through to bring you up.

Our ancestors have transmitted our life this way until today. Our present existence is totally due to our parents and ancestors. Not only did they transmit life generation after generation, they pioneered the lands and fields, shedding blood and perspiration, and they built a fine, rich country. We should be aware that our lives and country are standing on the great blessings provided by our ancestors through tremendous efforts.

If you can believe that your ancestors are always together with you, no matter what happens to you, you will never be tormented by loneliness or lose hope.

Most of our ancestors are no longer with us physically, but their spirits are still together with us. They are always watching over us with love and compassion from the spiritual world. Master Gedatsu Kongo stated as follows:

“We receive incalculable protection and guidance from our ancestor spirits. We well know that when parents are alive, they bestow unlimited affection upon their children. However, because parents are mortal and are bound by various worldly restrictions, even with parental love, things may not go as expected and may be inconsistent.

“Once our parents die and enter the spiritual realm, however, their affection becomes pure and perfect because they are no longer constrained by physical life. When we yearn for our parents, we are able to feel their affections very keenly. The same applies to our dear ancestors. Ancestor spirits confer especially affectionate protection to direct descendants.”

Therefore, it is important to recognize our ancestors as our roots and appreciate the great blessings we receive from them. This awareness and sense of appreciation will actually lead to our greater happiness.

Q *Why should we believe in the existence of a spiritual world?*

A Many people may believe that the material and physical world constitutes everything about life. But this is a superficial understanding of life.

When you closely observe the functions of your physical body, you will see that your heart, stomach and other internal organs are constantly working in your body. Are their functions controlled by your thoughts and will? No, definitely not. They work under the control of something beyond your thoughts, which is the invisible work of the Universal Life.

Modern medicine attests that our mind and body are not separate. Our existence is not simply a physical phenomenon, but it is always backed with the invisible works of life and spirit.

Master Gedatsu Kongo explains this as follows:

“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 – that we cannot, even for a second, be separated from God.”

(Continued on back page)

In November

Celebrating the Life and Legacy of Master Gedatsu Kongo

As we observe our traditional Thanksgiving holiday this month, let us also remember that November holds particular significance to Gedatsu members as the annual observances of our Founder's birth (November 28) and death (November 4). The following is a brief description of the life and legacy of Gedatsu Kongo.

Gedatsu Kongo was the originator and founder of the Gedatsu Church. He was born **Eizo Okano** on November 28, 1881, in Kitamotojuku Village of Saitama Prefecture near Tokyo, Japan. He was the fifth child born into the Okano family, a prominent farming family that served as village head for generations.



The thatched-roof home in Kitamotojuku Village is the birthplace of Gedatsu Kongo. The home is preserved on the Goreichi Holy Grounds today just as it stood when the Founder was born in 1881.

At the age of 48, after a career as a lay person and successful businessman, he underwent a religious awakening, which motivated him to question the religious doctrines of his day and pursue spiritual truths. His spiritual quest resulted in his establishing the Gedatsu Church in 1929.

Deeply troubled by the social conditions of his day, Gedatsu Kongo developed the Gedatsu teaching as a pragmatic, fundamental approach to solve the actual problems existing in society and the home.



President Okano (as Gedatsu Kongo was called by members) at his desk in "House Number 6" in Tokyo, which served as the teaching center in the early years of the Gedatsu Church.

Since the establishment of the Gedatsu Church, the Founder spent twenty years propagating the doctrine, devoting himself fully to the spiritual salvation of people and world peace.

In 1948, at the age of 68, Gedatsu Kongo passed into the spiritual realm.

On the first anniversary of the Founder's death, his ashes were brought to the Sennyuji Temple in Kyoto, where he was laid to rest in the inner sanctuary. He was posthumously conferred with the highest honor in the Buddhist tradition, the title of Archbishop.



On the sixth anniversary of Gedatsu Kongo's passing, in November 1954, the Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower was dedicated on the grounds of Sennyuji Temple.

Gedatsu Kongo's ashes were transferred to the tower, where they remain enshrined forever.

Gedatsu Kongo's soul is watching and guiding us from the spiritual realm. We should appreciate his daily guidance and protection and practice Gedatsu for the happiness of all people.



SHINKO (Sincere Practice)

By Gedatsu Kongo

Translated by **Rev. Hisakazu Taki**

Practice of Sincerity (Part 2)

The ultimate object of worship, in any case, must be the Universal God. This is because the Universal God is the absolute and supreme god of the universe. One should not be confused by various gods and deities in one's faith. All gods, deities and spiritual entities are incorporated within the Universal God.

The law that governs and regulates the entire universe, the principle and source of creative energy, authority and benevolence – all are the manifestation of the Divine Will of the Universal God.

Every object of belief – to which people pay respect through various shrines, churches and temples – belongs to the lineage of the Universal God in the Divine Realm. Therefore, at whichever shrine, church or temple one may pray, or whether one prays to one's ancestors, one ultimately offers reverence to the Universal God through each object of prayer.

Whether or not one worships only to fulfill one's selfish desires or achieve personal gain, if the purpose of that worship does not comply with Universal God's Will or is incompatible with the Universal Law, it must be rejected as an evil path. What's more, the spirits of animals and their like need no mentioning, but what can be considered as malicious interferences from spiritual entities other than that of our solar system, definitely must not be misconstrued.

Although it is easy to say reverence to God and respect for ancestors, in an ambiguous religious life, it is difficult to perceive the Divine Spirit; consequently, faith cannot escape being inconclusive. If one is to enter the religious life at all, it is imperative that one recognizes the reality of the Divine Spirit.

The object of faith should not be simply an abstract idea, such as gods or deities. Only when one actually feels the Divine Spirit within one's soul, can one commune and be united with it.

Just as all things have individual forms and characteristics, their spirits also have their individuality. Moreover, their living substances perish, but their spirits are immortal. They only change their forms. To be precise, the substance does not become extinct but, in fact, undergoes transformation. When their active lives end, their spirits separate and pursue different forms of life. For example, a lifetime is when the body and the spirit function as one, but at the time of death, the spirit disunites and enters a different world. However, the progress and circumstances after separation differ in accordance with conditions and time. In short, for the spirit to elevate itself and eventually enter the realm of the Divine Spirit, it requires several stages.

We, who are truly defective and defiled in body and soul, are unable to come in contact with the absolute supreme Divine Spirit. Accordingly, we cannot perceive the actual existence of the Divine Spirit, but we can readily come in touch with the so-called spirits of the deceased. People who are spiritually sensitive may easily see countless spirits of the departed and the like, who are wandering around because of their misdeeds and negative karma during their lifetime, or because of the inadequate enshrinement and the lack of blessing or memorial services.

The spirits that present themselves through sincere spiritual media, in most cases, are those of low-ranking or evil spirits. The sublime Divine Spirit and the like, unless it is through solemn enshrinement or ceremonial vows, absolutely cannot be sensed.

Nevertheless, recognition of the existence of departed spirits could be the commencement of realization of the existence of the Divine Spirit.

(To be continued next month)



SEPTEMBER 2020 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,000

General Donations: Akashi family, M/M J. Detwiler/ J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M/M D. Tsuboi, M/M Akashi, K. Kitaoe, S. Nishino, A. Cool

Special Acknowledgments

S. Bush Appreciation for Fall Festival
M/M Ho. Tsujimura Appreciation for Fall Festival
M/M R. Ito Appreciation for Fall Festival

Southern California Total: \$3,325

General: M/M K. Chinen, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, D. Shiroishi, A. Tomita, P. Tomita, M/M Ho. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

Y. Oishi "Never Forgotten" Service
H. Inouye "Never Forgotten" Service
M/M G. Wood Appreciation for new car
T. Bussey Funeral and burial services for Mrs. Hiroko Omiya
N. Okano In memory of Masako Oyanagi
M/M R. Allum Special donation (\$500)
J. Tomita Tomita and Katako family online blessing
F. Miyamura "Never Forgotten" for Frank Miyamura
J. Mah Funeral service for Tomoki Oyanagi

Online Donations: Total: \$1,477

General: A. Kishida, T. Palelek, N. Tsuboi, M/M P. Reid, H. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

B. Shimasaki "Never Forgotten" for Linda Sanchez
D. Ide Appreciation for Fall Festival
H. Taki Appreciation for Fall Festival (\$500)
D. Ide "Never Forgotten" Service
M/T Hamada "Never Forgotten" Service

Note:

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

IN ADDITION

Donate, Pay Membership Dues 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.

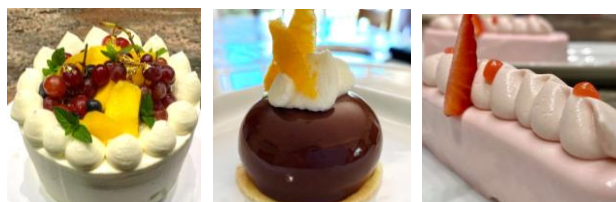
You can also pay your membership dues, too, by going to the Members page on the site.

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



Sweet Perfection Confections

In a recent *IN TOUCH* email bulletin (See "Giving from the Heart" – September 24), northern California member, **Naoya Kishida**, shared some of his picture-perfect dessert creations. At the request of readers, Naoya identifies his yummy-looking desserts.



(Left) layered tropical cake made with mango mousse, passion fruit gelé and vanilla sponge. (Center) citrus chocolate mousse: dark chocolate mousse with citrus ganache in the center. (Right) strawberry mousse, strawberry gelé with angel food cake sponge. Yum!



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Florence Sueyoshi** of the L.A. Church. A dedicated and active member for many years, Flo was introduced to Gedatsu through her friends, the late **Ben** and **Nora Toguchi**, when they invited her to

the *Ujigami* Festival – now the Autumn Moon Festival – at the old L.A. church. Listening to **Reverend Jerry Shiroishi's** lectures back then, says Flo, made her aware of the importance of appreciation and gratitude in our daily lives. She enjoys traveling (pre-pandemic), as well as watching her favorite Korean TV dramas.

Joyce Reid, Editor

Kiyoko Hirayama, Arlene Okimura, Photographers

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Mica Rodriguez, Joy Sebe, Florence Suyeyoshi,
Rev. Hisakazu Taki**

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(Gedatsu Q&A – continuing from page 4)

You may believe that, when we die, we will become naught. But actually, we will remain as spirits after our physical death. Most of our ancestors are gone physically, but their spirits are still in the spiritual world, and are always watching over us.

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated:

“Our real miseries and joys are, at the same time, our ancestors.’ Likewise, their sufferings and delights are instantly transmitted to us. We are, ever, one with our ancestors. It can be said that we are the crystallization of our ancestor spirits.”

If you can believe that your ancestors are always together with you, no matter what happens to you, you will never be tormented by loneliness or lose hope. Your awareness and understanding of the spiritual world should be the foundation of your true peace and happiness.

Q *Gedatsu Church provides many kinds of holy paper plaques. Why should we enshrine these paper plaques in our homes?*

A Master Gedatsu Kongo left Gedatsu members many kinds of holy paper plaques for our happiness, representing his love and compassion for us. The Holy *Goho*, which represents the Universal Life Force, is inscribed on each of the paper plaques. When you enshrine these paper plaques in your home, you and your family will be protected by the sacred power of the Holy *Goho*.

You may consider these paper plaques as reminders that you are always protected by receiving immeasurable blessings from the Universal Life Force and guardian angels. When you are aware of the great blessings you receive from all people and many things, and give respect and appreciation each day, you will be guided most appropriately in life.

