



# GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA  
[www.gedatsu-usa.org](http://www.gedatsu-usa.org)

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### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"When we become aware of our  
Divine Blessings, we can create  
a good life for ourselves."*

Even though we cannot see our mind, we know that it exists. In the same way, although God cannot be seen, it cannot be said that God does not exist.

We are allowed to live by receiving the Divine Blessing. We awake each morning, our heart beats, we breathe the air, we consume water and receive sunlight. Everything we need to survive is provided by God and all things in the universe. This is how we are able to live each day.

Being aware of these great blessings, we should do our best in our daily activities with appreciation. We will then be able to live a good life.



## MAY AND JUNE ACTIVITIES

Due to COVID-19, in-person services and activities remain suspended. The L.A. and Sacramento Regional Boards will announce any changes in their respective regions.

### May

- **Saito Goma Fire Ceremony**

The scaled-back service from the Sacramento Spiritual Center—attended by ministers and aides only—will be broadcast virtually in early May and viewable on YouTube. Watch for announcements.

- **"Never Forgotten" Memorial Services**

Sunday, May 9, at 10 a.m. PDT (see page 2)

- **Appreciation and Mother's Day Service** – Sunday, May 16, at

11 a.m. PDT. Livestreamed from the L.A. Church.

### June

- **"Never Forgotten" Memorial Services**

Sacramento Spiritual Center: Sunday, June 6, at 10 a.m.

Los Angeles Church: Sunday, June 13, at 10 a.m.

- **Appreciation Service, Mother Kiyota Memorial Service and Father's Day Service** – Sunday, June 20, at 11 a.m. PDT.

Livestreamed from the L.A. Church.

**Photo:** At the Spring Festival at the Sacramento Spiritual Center in April, prayers for All Souls are given by Minister-trainee Mica Rodriguez, Senior Deacon Jackson Ito and regional board chair Dave Ide. Rev. Naoya Okano, at rear of *Gochi* Sanctuary, livestreams the service to members. See page 2.



### May “Never Forgotten” Online 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. A digital link to the video is emailed to members on the morning of the service.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 9, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Masao Taketa, Kenneth Taketa, Ben Tsutomu Ide, Betty Ozaki, Larizlado Rodriguez, Ramona Rodriguez, Shigeno Tateishi, Raymond Kaname Nakamoto, Isami Suzuki, Hyozaburo Hirose and Akino Ogawa.**

The Los Angeles Church will also hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 9, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Satsuki Akiyoshi, Keiji Ariyasu, Marilyn S. Ariyasu, Tsugu Endo, Andrué Gutierrez, Wesley Hiram, John Kuritani, Chih-ming Lai, Sumako Matsumoto, Tamotsu Matsuura, Kikuye Miyamura, Nobuichi Miyashita, June Junko Morioka, Tameharu Nagao, Hitomi Nakaguchi, Ronald Yoshio Nakamura, Shigemi Nakamura, Shizuyo Nakamura, Sumiko Nakamura, Seiko Notoya, Mitsuji Okada, Joyce Okimura, Miyoko Okimura, Adeline Sanchez, David Harry Schonbach, Rev. Jerry Shiroishi, Joe Mitsuhide Takara, Kiyo Tanji, Yozo Tsujimura, Jane Harue Wakasa and Hiroshi Yamamisaka.**



### Hawaii Church to Celebrate Forty Years

Gedatsu Church of Hawaii will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Sunday, September 12. The Honolulu church, under the ministerial direction of **Rev. Kazuo Yamada**, welcomes members from Japan and U.S. branches to participate in the celebration. Established in 1955, Gedatsu Hawaii was unable to celebrate its anniversary last year because of the pandemic.



### 143<sup>rd</sup> Spring Grand Festival

The Spring Festival was held at the Sacramento Spiritual Center on April 11 with restricted attendance due to the ongoing pandemic. The Festival service was conducted by **Rev. Naoya Okano, Minister-trainee Mica Rodriguez, Senior Deacon Jackson Ito** and **regional board chair Dave Ide**, each performing multiple roles in the 30-minute program, which was livestreamed from the *Gochi* Sanctuary. Remarks by **Bishop Teruo Okano** were given via video (see page 3).

**Photos, at top, Rev. Naoya conducts the Opening Prayer. Middle, at left, Mica Rodriguez, as emcee, welcomes members to the virtual Festival. At right, Jackson Ito expresses gratitude to countless individuals, whose efforts have aided humanity during the pandemic. At bottom, Rev. Naoya displays some of the technical equipment that is employed to create the livestreaming event.**



### Take Care of Our Earth, Our Common Home

Video Address by **Bishop Teruo Okano** \*  
Spring Festival 2021

I truly appreciate that we can hold the Grand Spring Festival 2021 in the U.S. Unfortunately, I'm unable to be with you in person. However, I'm happy that I can deliver my message to you through this video.

In 2020, we saw the start of movements for global societal changes. We lost many precious lives to the COVID-19 pandemic and have experienced numerous natural disasters caused by global climate change. Many people are still recovering from these events and struggling to exist because of financial hardships and social unrest.

I wish to express my deepest sympathies to the families of the victims of these misfortunes. I would like to sincerely pray for the peace of mind of those who are grieving and suffering for their loss and feeling anxious and fearful. I hope that we can all unite and support each other in overcoming these difficulties.

We, as humans, are at a crossroads in our history. Since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when we deceived ourselves into thinking that we could control the global environment, we have been critically impacting our physical environment and overtaxing our earth systems.

As a result, we are confronted by disastrous phenomena, such as extreme global weather events, a new epidemic like COVID-19, and widespread locust plagues. If these conditions continue unabated, the stability of our global environment – within which our human civilization developed – will soon become imbalanced, and human society will end up hanging by a thread.

World societies are gravely alarmed at the perilousness of our earth systems, which have maintained our material civilization, and the vulnerability of our societies that are dependent on that material wealth. This has led to the realization that it will be extremely difficult to continue the lifestyles we have taken for granted up to now.

We must immediately find ways to reach consensus and take action to save our earth, our common property. To overcome the crises we face, we need to develop a sustainable future environment by changing our social and financial systems, which hugely impact our earth – things like energy consumption, food production, renewable resources – and create eco-friendly cities that can build healthy, equitable and prosperous future societies.

**We must immediately find ways to reach consensus and take action to save our earth, our common property.**

In this time of transition, we expect that new technologies, systems and industries will continually arise, that our life and work styles will evolve, and everything in our daily lives will rapidly change.

However, by pursuing only things of material value that we can see, our current society can no longer function effectively. Now is the time that we must find value in invisible, non-material things – such as information, networks, knowledge, communication and spirit.

In his book, *Shinko*, Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, "At an age when the world is undergoing grave and critical changes, we should awaken spiritually, or we will likely forfeit the opportunity forever." In other words, we are living in that critical period of change, so now is the time for us to purify our souls and awaken our spiritual selves.

*(Continued on back page)*

\* To view the video, go to the Gedatsu YouTube site:  
<https://www.youtube.com/c/GedatsuChurchUSA>.

## **SHINKO (Sincere Practice)**

By Gedatsu Kongo

Translated by Rev. Hisakazu Taki

### **World Unity**



*For peoples around the world – having differing ideologies, beliefs, traditions and positions – attaining Gedatsu is not an easy task.*

*People will submit if coerced, avail themselves if induced with benefits, but these are only temporary effects.*

*It is not the power of ideas or propaganda that motivates sincere people to spiritually awaken and requite the great blessing of God. Rather, it is the strength of religious faith that enlightens one to the Divine Will and the righteous path.*

*Those who do not have faith cannot lead others who do. Those who do have faith, as God leads, become self-obedient of the righteous path. Accordingly, to realize the legitimacy of God is the basic question.*

*Those having faith at present and have not, as yet, been initiated into the mysteries of Gedatsu, cannot be said to have true belief. To say the least, that faith is adulterated and is inconclusive. This is because true faith will definitely impart righteousness and should evince the necessity for cooperation and compliance to it.*

*Path of God is but one. The universe is unified by one law. On this point, we cannot expect too much of the conventionally established religions' propagation and publicity.*

*Only when one deals with people with the benevolence and sincerity disciplined by religion, one can actually inspire them. At that time, one has already transcended religion.*

*Love is God, and is Power.*

*Sincerity is also the essence of God. The ultimate of all religions coincides here. The ultimate of every religion is not the religion of opposing sects. It has surpassed religion and reached God.*

*Only by embracing the Benevolent Will of the Universal Life Force and coming in touch with the peoples of the world, regardless of which religion they may be devoted to, will we be able to guide them.*

*For experiment's sake, detach yourself from selfish interests and with all your heart and soul, attempt to persuade just one of the onrushing multitudes. If you cannot persuade just one, you absolutely won't be able to lead scores.*



## Gedatsu Q&A - Part 11

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

### Q *What is the significance of the Saito-Goma Fire Service?*

A The *Fudo* guardian, which is depicted in the stone statue on the Gedatsu Spiritual Center grounds, originates from Buddhism and represents the unshakable love and non-judgmental guidance that lead us to true happiness. *Fu* means “un” and *do* means “motion.” Thus, the word *Fudo* represents an immovable force. Although *Fudo* has a threatening appearance, the symbolism of the stone statue reinforces the strength of the *Fudo* guardian, as well as its characteristics of fortitude and compassion. The figure displays fire to burn away evil tendencies within us and a sword to destroy illusions which cloud our minds. With its wide-open eye, *Fudo* admonishes willfulness and obstinacy; with its half-closed eye, it gently guides us to enlightenment.



*Fudo* is the principal object of the sacred *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony, which is conducted at the annual Spring and Fall Festivals. The function of the ceremony is to evoke the power of *Fudo* for the salvation of unrested souls, for happiness in all aspects of our lives and for world peace.

Appreciation is the key. When you express sincere appreciation to *Fudo*, you spiritually enter the fire where *Fudo* presides, and you receive its wisdom and unconditional love in return.

For Gedatsu members, the *Saito-Goma* ceremony holds a special spiritual significance. Beyond its practical purpose of fulfilling prayers and offering hope, the fire ceremony’s ultimate goal is to express appreciation for the blessings we receive from the Universal Life Force. It is also to pray for humans’ happiness in all aspects of their life, for world peace and the salvation of unrested spirits.

*Fudo*’s power is concentrated on fulfilling the prayers and supplications inscribed on the wood plaques that we offer to the fire. At the same time, the officiant harnesses the power of *Fudo* and channels this power to the people gathered at the ceremony. The effect of the fire eradicates their illusions and negative elements.

### Q *What is Manbu Kuyo?*

A In the summer of 1934, Mrs. Sui Otsuka, a pioneer Gedatsu leader, performed Holy *Goho* practice. The spirit of a Nichiren Buddhist monk appeared, asking to receive *Manbu Kuyo*, which literally translates as “ten thousand blessings.”

“After I entered the spiritual world,” said the spirit, “I became aware of the significance of *Manbu Kuyo* for the first time. I long to receive *Manbu Kuyo*.”

Unfamiliar with *Manbu Kuyo*, Mrs. Otsuka consulted Master Gedatsu Kongo. “So, at last, the soul of the priest asked you for *Manbu Kuyo*,” he said. “I have been expecting this request. We can now initiate *Manbu Kuyo*.”

When members asked if they, too, could apply for the special blessing, Gedatsu Kongo replied, “*Manbu Kuyo* is for all souls and spirits. Everyone can apply for it.”

Thus, *Manbu Kuyo* was performed for the first time at the *Gedatsu-kai* Fall Festival in 1934. It has been practiced twice a year since then.

(Continued on page 6)

(*Gedatsu Q&A* – Continued from page 5)



*Manbu Kuyo* is the ultimate blessing that purifies all souls and spirits and allows them to rest in peace. Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, “By receiving *Manbu Kuyo*, all souls and spirits will be elevated to a higher level to work more freely and help their descendants more efficiently.”

Of course, when we perform holy tea blessing for our ancestors and other spirits, they are able to accept our sincere prayer and rest in peace. But, by receiving *Manbu Kuyo*, the spirits will be elevated to a higher sphere, and can help us more freely and efficiently.

**Q**      *What is the difference between Saito-Goma and Manbu Kuyo?*

**A**      The main purpose of *Manbu Kuyo* is to offer our sincere appreciation to our ancestors and other spirits and pray for their complete peace. The main purpose of the *Saito-Goma* Fire Ceremony is to dissolve our negative traits from the past by the holy power of the *Fudo* guardian and pray for people’s happiness and the betterment of society.

These traditions are different, but they are both sacred practices. Please understand their differences and apply for them with sincere prayer.



Excerpts from USA TODAY articles

### What You Can Do to Help the Asian American Community

Asian Americans have seen a rise of both physical and online attacks, fueled by unwarranted beliefs that they are responsible for the spread of COVID-19.

You can make donations to organizations:

- Asian American Advancing Justice
- Hate is a Virus
- Stop Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Hate
- AAPI Civic Engagement Fund

Stop AAPI Hate recommends these steps if you are a witness to anti-Asian racism:

- **Take action.** Go to the targeted person and offer support.
- **Actively listen.** Before you do anything, ask – and then respect the targeted person’s response. If need be, keep an eye on the situation.
- **Ignore attacker.** Try using your voice, body language or distractions to de-escalate the situation (though use your judgment).
- **Accompany.** Ask the targeted person to leave with you if whatever is going on escalates.
- **Offer emotional support.** Find out how the targeted person is feeling and help them determine what do next.



### Message from the Gedatsu Church

We caution our Asian American members to be vigilant and safe at all times. When out in public, hide purses and valuables from being targets for theft. Escort elderly members when they are in public.

## MARCH 2021 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$1,825

**General Donations:** M/M D. Tsuboi, P. Harada, S. Nishino, K. Kitasoe, M/M J. Horner, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, A. Cool, M. Rodriguez

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

M/M D. Ide "Never Forgotten" for John Chin, Rin Ide, Toyota Kino, John Hatae

### **Southern California** Total: \$10,161

**General:** M/M R. Allum, M/M K. Chinen, F. Dyson, K. Fujii, D. Ide, M/M M. Ishida, T. Ishida, S. Kaku, M. Kimura, M/M K. Kuritani, J. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M B. Mizokami, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M L. Muronaka, M. Nakamura, R. Nakamura, T. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano, S. Okimura, J. Reid, M/M S. Shalkan, De. Shiroishi, M. Shiroishi, N. Takara, P. Tomita, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M R. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood, T. Yamada

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

Gedatsu-kai Japan	Spring Festival (\$1,000)
T. Murakami	"Never Forgotten"
D. Mukai	"Never Forgotten" for Fred Tanaka
M/M V. Mizokami	2 <sup>nd</sup> -year memorial service for Tomiko Mizokami
J. Ito	In memory of Nancy Ito
J. Ito	Appreciation for Sun Spirit
N. Gonzalez / R. Rivera	One-year memorial service for Nestor Gonzales-Buenahora (\$1,000)
Do / De Shiroishi	Never Forgotten" for Terry Fumio Shiroishi
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	Ohigan service
D. Mukai	Ohigan service
T. Yamada	Appreciation for <i>Manbu Kuyo</i>
T. Yamada	Appreciation for business and customers (\$1,000)
Do. Shiroishi	Ohigan service

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$641

**General:** R/T Reano, N. Tsuboi, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, T. Palelek, M/M P. Reid, E. Chinen, D. Monroe

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

J. Hamamoto "Never Forgotten"  
M/M P. Reid Ohigan blessing for Ogura and Reid families

## GEDATSU RESOURCES



### **DVDs of Gedatsu Videos and More**

If you, or someone you know, don't have access to a computer or internet or have no email address, you can still stay connected with Gedatsu and informed on church activities.

DVDs containing church videos and other online communications (such as IN TOUCH bulletins and other notices) are available from your local church.



YouTube videos, like the Spring Grand Festival program livestreamed from Sacramento on April 11, are available on DVD by request.

### **Private Consultation and Family Services**

Our ministers are always available to support members and friends by phone, videoconferencing and other means for private consultations, family blessings and memorial services, and holy *Goho* and *Hiho* practice.

To arrange a service or consultation, contact your local church:

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

*Note: Special Acknowledgments donations are listed for gifts \$100+.  
Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+.*

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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Ken and Mei-Ling Shiroishi**, who live in Portland, Oregon.

"It's been wonderful to watch **Reverend Naoya Okano** use social media to reach out to members, friends and

newcomers during these many pandemic months," say Ken and Mei-Ling. "Socially distanced families, like us, have stayed connected to each other and Gedatsu through those efforts."

#### Editorial Staff

**Joyce Reid**, Editor

**Rev. Naoya Okano**, adviser

**Mica Rodriguez**, minister-in-training, adviser

Editorial contributors to this issue:

**Dave Ide, Bishop Teruo Okano, Ken Shiroishi, Mei-Ling Shiroishi, Rev. Hisakazu Taki, Rev. Kazuo Yamada**



#### **Gedatsu Kongo on the Natural World**

*Even though God is silent,  
everything representing God is  
eloquently speaking to us.*

*Divine God's expressive  
teachings are near at hand.  
Right in front of your eyes.  
In a single flower.  
Be mindful.*

*Even in the expressions of the  
purple hills and crystal  
streams, there is abundant  
material for enlightenment.*

#### ***(Take Care of Our Earth – Continued from page 3)***

To live wisely in the future, we must reform ourselves by taking steps to cultivate our minds, so we are not swayed by mere words and ego, and only pursue the true way to happiness.

Gedatsu Kongo said, "Ego destroys self, family, country and the world. It is an endless disease. Observe the present world condition."

He admonished egoistic greed, which created today's chaotic world. Excessive greed harms our mental and physical health, inflicts pain and conflict in our daily life, and disrupts the social order of nations, eventually destroying the spirit of humanity.

We must awaken our God-given soul now and arouse our minds to the true way of living. Self-reformation will inspire a new awareness, inspire societies and our daily lives, and lead to positive social reform. Let's each of us take responsibility and put forth effort to create the dawn of a new era.

I sincerely pray for your health and happiness.

