

GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA

www.gedatsu-usa.org

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Be mindful of the present moment.
Gedatsu lessons are
always available to us."*

What is Gedatsu?

As Gedatsu students, we have many things to learn and practice: the teachings, *Goho* study, *Amacha* blessing, *Hiho* meditation, etc. But why should we study and practice them?

I believe we study and practice Gedatsu to live a good and meaningful life.

Indeed, most important is how we should live each day. We should learn from Gedatsu lessons that are always available in front of us. We can find the key to living a good and meaningful life in our everyday life.

UPCOMING CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Our Gedatsu churches have commenced a "soft reopening," consisting of a combination of in-person and virtual services. We observe public health guidelines in order to promote a healthy, safe environment. It is up to each individual and family to decide if the time is right to participate in person.

SEPTEMBER 2021



Fall Grand Festival – In Person and Virtual

Sacramento Spiritual Center – Sunday, September 5, at 10 a.m.
Members are invited to attend. Read details on page 2.

"Never Forgotten" Memorial Services - Virtual

Los Angeles Church – Sunday, September 12, at 10 a.m.
Sacramento Spiritual Center – Sunday, September 19, at 10 a.m.

Appreciation and Higan Service – In Person

Los Angeles Church – Sunday, September 19, at 10 a.m.

OCTOBER 2021

"Never Forgotten" Memorial Services - Virtual

Sacramento Spiritual Center – Sunday, October 3, at 10 a.m.
Los Angeles Church – Sunday, October 10, at 10 a.m.

Appreciation Service – In Person

Sacramento Spiritual Center – Sunday, October 10, at 9:30 a.m.
Los Angeles Church – Sunday, October 17, at 10 a.m.

Appreciation and All Souls Service – In Person

Sacramento Spiritual Center – Sunday, October 24, at 9:30 a.m.



Fall Grand Festival

Sunday, September 5, at 10 a.m.

Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento

A scaled-back three-part program – *Gochi* Sanctuary Service, Memorial Tower Ceremony and *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony – will be conducted.

- Members are invited to attend.
- Health and safety protocols will be observed.
- The event will be livestreamed and videorecorded for those who wish to participate from home.
- Sermon by *Gedatsu-kai* guest minister, **Rev. Yasunori Miyasaka**, via video from Japan.
- *Saito Goma* plaques are limited only to attendees.
- A free box lunch will be served.



Hawaii Church Celebration Canceled

Gedatsu Church of Hawaii announced that its 40th anniversary celebration, scheduled for September 12, has been canceled in compliance with emergency COVID-19-related restrictions, which were recently announced by the City/County of Honolulu. Due to the surge in cases, the restrictions limit the size of gatherings to curb the spread of the virus through at least September 22.

“While we are very disappointed that we will not be able to celebrate our 40th anniversary event,” said **Rev. Kazuo Yamada**, “we welcome fellow members from the U.S. mainland and Japan to visit our church at any time after the coronavirus threat has subsided.”



Autumn Moon Festival Canceled

The L.A. Church’s annual celebration and fundraiser, normally held in October, has been canceled for the second consecutive year because of continuing health and safety concerns with the COVID-19 virus.



September “Never Forgotten” Online 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.

Currently, 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 Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, September 12, 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, Hajimu Murakami, Charles Migiwa Nishi, Tomoki Oyanagi, Jacobus Johannes Reckers, Ruth Muriel Reckers, Kiyoshi George Sakuma, Linda Christine Sanchez, John Takeshi Sangen, Yuri T. Sangen, Hiroshi Sato, Setsu Shiroishi, Yoshio Fred Shoga, Himeko Tanji, Itsuya Frank Tanji, Moto Tanji, and Atsuko Watanabe.**

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, September 19, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Robert Katsumi Fukushima, Soichi Nakatani, Masako Sakamoto Tagawa, Shigetaro Kino, Tetsuo Yomogida, Linda Carol Kashiwagi, Glen Shuji Hatae and Teruko Kino.**

Sign(s) of the Times



As the L.A. Church gradually resumes in-person gatherings, visitors are required to follow health and safety instructions that are prominently displayed.



Survey Says . . .

Members' feedback points to areas and ways to improve our church

In May, the Gedatsu Church sent an online survey to 212 members via email to gain a more accurate picture of how members feel about their church and their overall experience as church members. Twelve percent of those members responded to the survey. All responses are anonymous. Their feedback is helping to guide our Gedatsu Church – leaders, ministers and members alike – in improving key areas that are important to everyone.

Some highlights from the survey:

- ✓ Spiritual education (90%) was by far the leading reason respondents attend church, followed by social connection (37%) and obligation to family (26%).
- ✓ Most respondents attended church (pre-COVID) nearly once a month.
- ✓ As far as church engagement, an equal number of respondents was either moderately or very much engaged.
- ✓ Respondents felt their understanding of the Gedatsu teaching was either moderate or very strong.
- ✓ When asked what would encourage them to attend and/or engage more with the church, respondents replied: special events and activities (58%), friends (42%), family members (37%), posts on social media (11%) and available transportation (11%).
- ✓ Respondents receive church communications primarily via newsletter and email bulletins (95%), followed by social media posts (42%), attending church (21%), other members (16%) and family members (11%).

A sampling of ways respondents say the church can improve:

• *Have more activities to invite the public.* • *Reach out to the community, involving families seeking spiritual education.* • *Research how other churches are managing to get new members.* • *Find out how Asian communities engage young, active members.* • *Have events like food trucks, flea marts, game night, wine & paint night.* • *Build a strong social media presence.* • *Help members glimpse how the universe will look from the spiritual world after they die so they can learn from that while still living.* • *Have more activities for family members.* • *Engage more with local community by inviting speakers (on tax/estate planning, cooking demos, cultural lessons) to bring potential members.* • *Offer more spiritual education in goho shugyo, amacha kuyo, and manbu kuyo.* • *Become more involved as community member, caring for the emotional and psychological needs of people.* • *Continue the livestreaming and recording events and ceremonies.* • *Hold member discussions on the impact of Gedatsu and how to use spiritual principles in life.* • *Get involved in interfaith activities.* • *Be part of discussion on Black Lives Matter, Asian hate crimes and other "real world" concerns.*



90%

Spiritual Education

Leading reason to attend church

58%

Special Events

Encourages them to attend church



95%

Newsletters & Email Bulletins

Primary source of getting church communications



Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey.

If you would like a complete copy of the survey results, contact your local branch church.

Fresh, New Look

L.A. Church Undergoes Repairs and Improvements – Indoors and Out

The Los Angeles Gedatsu Church recently tackled a number of much-needed repairs and improvements throughout the church complex and grounds.

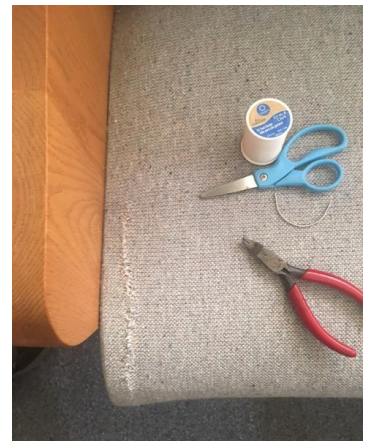
The upgrades were funded by a generous \$50,000 donation by **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe*** – earmarked specifically for L.A. Church repairs – and took advantage of the months of the pandemic-induced church closure. Specific improvement areas were suggested by church members and the L.A. Regional Board, which researched and managed each project. Scheduled from April of this year, the project list includes:

- ✓ Installation of security cameras
- ✓ Resealing of parking lots
- ✓ Removal of dead trees, shrubs
- ✓ Installation of pavers for erosion control
- ✓ Sanding/repainting of sanctuary and kitchen doors, awnings
- ✓ Retiling of floors in kitchen, bathrooms and hospitality room
- ✓ Repair of church pew fabric tears
- ✓ Installation of new 85-inch flat-screen monitor in sanctuary (see back page)

Large-scale projects, such as the asphalt resealing and floor retiling, were conducted by professional contractors. Other projects, such as landscaping and smaller repairs and installations, were performed by members, including **Ken Kuritani, Mark Ishida, Paul Nakamura** and **Rev. Naoya**.

“I’m sure that L.A. Church members are delighted to see the improvements that have been made during the months of their absence,” says Mark Ishida, regional board co-chair. “We’re proud of the fresh, new look of our church.”

* Rev. Sebe’s gift was in addition to his donations of \$100,000 to the L.A. Church general fund and \$50,000 to the Sacramento Spiritual Center.





Quotations of Master Gedatsu Kongo - #4

Selected and translated by **Rev. Hisakazu Taki** from
“The Teachings of Master Gedatsu Kongo”

- ☼ This world is a manifestation of the Divine Will. It has a noble common purpose, which is to lead everyone to perfect harmony and happiness.
- ☼ The purpose of the Universal Law is the peace and happiness of individuals and society. Hardships discipline our mind so that we can reach this goal.
- ☼ Divine lessons are always available to us. We can learn the path towards enlightenment and happiness from every phenomenon before us.
- ☼ Gedatsu encourages us to self-reflect. We can do no good without knowing ourselves.
- ☼ Do not stick to the doctrines but learn the very truth of Gedatsu through actual experience.
- ☼ The Universal Truth exists even in a single leaf of wild grass. Be mindful and step forward in the Gedatsu study without wasting time by discussing whether or not God exists.
- ☼ Gedatsu is not dead formalism. It should be always alive.
- ☼ Never forget the immeasurable blessings we receive from our country, society and parents. This is the basics of our Gedatsu study.
- ☼ The Universal Law is the basic principle of Gedatsu.
- ☼ Gedatsu is to put morality into practice.
- ☼ Religious teachings should be always updated just as the world map is updated each year.
- ☼ Religion should not be fixed. It should always move forward with the times.
- ☼ Gedatsu is based on reality. Rain nurtures plants, makes them bloom, and makes flowers fall. This is reality, not a concept.
- ☼ Look inwardly. Self-reflection is the basis for learning truth.
- ☼ A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. We cannot reach any place without walking along a path. A thought without practice is like a house of cards.
- ☼ The result cannot be known without knowing the cause. When we clearly know what we are, we can see what our descendants will be. By deeply reflecting on our past behavior, we will then be able to build a bright future. No result comes out without cause.



Gedatsu Q&A - Part 15

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *Why is it important to self-reflect?*

A Self-reflection is important because we are all more or less self-centered and selfish, and yet, we are usually not aware of our selfishness. As long as we live, we cannot be free from ego completely, because our existence is dependent on the sacrifice of many living things on earth. Man's uniqueness is to be aware of his self-centeredness.

We always see things from our viewpoint. Other people have different viewpoints. This is how we usually see and think things. But we are usually unaware of this. We usually believe that what we see and think is the only truth, and criticize others from our viewpoint. This attitude causes various troubles and conflicts with others.

When we self-reflect and become aware of our self-centeredness, we will be able to accept other people's views and values and become more considerate of others. Our respect and understanding of other people will then be deepened. This is the reason why self-reflection is important.

Q *How can we become free from ego?*

A Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, "*Gedatsu is to reflect on yourself and be free from ego.*"

It is because we human beings are more or less self-centered without exception. This self-centeredness within us causes various troubles and conflicts with other people. Therefore, it is important to be free from ego for our coexistence and prosperity.

Then, how can we become free from ego? Actually, it is impossible for us to be completely free from ego, because our existence is absolutely dependent on the sacrifice of many living things on earth. But we can be aware of this fact of existence. This is humans' uniqueness. This awareness is the key leading to our true happiness.

No one can exist by himself or herself alone. Our existence is dependent on others. We are supported and nurtured by many people and all things in the universe. When we forget to appreciate the blessings from people and everything on earth, we become selfish and arrogant.

Master Gedatsu Kongo said: "*Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world. If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper.*"

When we become aware that we are supported by many people and all things around us, we will naturally feel grateful for them. We will then become less selfish than before and will be more considerate of others. Self-reflection thus makes us less selfish and more appreciative and considerate of others.

Q *Is it wrong to pray to God for attaining our desires?*

A It is not wrong to pray to God for attaining our desires. Prayer is most essential for our religious faith. The question is how we pray and what we pray for. Even when we pray very earnestly, if we pray only for the attainment of our selfish desires, it is not a rightful prayer. This kind of prayer will not lead us to true happiness.

The most important element of our faith is the sense of appreciation. This is because we are all allowed to live by God and receive immeasurable blessings from many people and everything on earth. Our current existence is totally due to the Divine great blessing. Therefore, when we pray, first of all, we should sincerely thank God for the blessing. We may then pray for the attainment of our wishes.

When we pray, we should not rigidly hold onto our desires but leave the outcome to God, saying, "Please guide me most appropriately." Even if our prayers are not granted, we should accept the result with appreciation and do our best in the current situation. This sense of humility and gratitude will lead us on the most appropriate path for our life.



Northern California Total: \$3,525

General Donations: S. Nishino, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, K. Kitasoe, J. Ito, T. Wakabayashi, M/M J. Horner, M/M D. Tsuboi, A. Sebe, M/M D. Ide, M. Rodriguez, K. Gibson

Special Acknowledgments

J. Ito	In memory of Buster Ide
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation for 49-day service for Buster Ide (\$600)
R. Ide	Appreciation for 49-day service for Buster Ide
M/M D. Ide	Niche service appreciation
M/M R. Ito	Jackson Ito 80 th birthday (\$500)
R. Ruozzi	In memory of Susie Tateishi
N/J Swenson	In memory of Susie Tateishi

Southern California Total: \$2,800

General: M/M M. Hamada, T. Ishida, M/M K. Kuritani, I. Long, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Murakami, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, D. Shiroishi, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M R. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

Arlene Okimura	Appreciation for ancestor blessing and <i>goshimpo</i>
Mary Kimura	"Never Forgotten" service
M/M T. Matsumoto	"Never Forgotten" for Kyoko Nakaguchi and Tomoko Imai
Yoko Oishi	27 th anniversary memorial service for Masakazu Oishi
Marian Mizokami	Successful eye surgery
Tadao Ishida	"Never Forgotten" for Michiye and Nobuyoshi Shimohira
M/M Ken Kuritani	Grandson's graduation and acceptance to Berkeley

Online Donations: Total: \$525

General: N. Tsuboi, W. Young, D. Allum, T. Palelek, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

Joyce Reid	"Never Forgotten" for Eddie and Nancy Ogura
Wendy Young	"Never Forgotten" for Yoko Tsujimura

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

**Online Donations –
Convenient, Easy, Secure**

Gedatsu Church encourages you to make your donations online. It's a convenient, easy and secure way to contribute to the church – 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.





The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Julie Mah**, who lives in Los Angeles with her husband, **Donald**. Julie was raised in the Gedatsu faith by her late parents, **Tomoki** and **Margaret (Yuzuki) Oyanagi**, pioneers of the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church.

Julie recalls attending the Festivals at *Goreichi* in Sacramento when she was a child. While driving the family to one Fall Festival, Julie's father was involved in an accident that miraculously resulted in no injuries or car damage. Julie credits the spiritual guidance and protection of their guardian angel and believes in the unmeasurable blessings they receive daily from the Gedatsu teaching.

Editorial Staff

Joyce Reid, Editor

Rev. Naoya Okano, adviser

Mica Rodriguez, minister-in-training, adviser

Editorial contributors to this issue:

Dave Ide, **Mark Ishida**, **Julie Mah**, **Rev. Hisakazu Taki**,
Deacon June Tanaka

(Fresh, New Look – Continued from page 4)

Among the improvement projects at the L.A. Church is the installation of an 85-inch flat screen monitor, which enhances the overall viewing experience for the congregation.

"The new screen, which is 10 inches larger than our existing screen, provides improved picture quality and readability," says Rev. Naoya. "Now, with stereo sound from two monitors and the ability to display two different images at the same time, the impact of visual communication is greater and more enjoyable."

Gedatsu Church USA
Los Angeles Branch
7850 Hill Drive
Rosemead, CA 91770

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The new 85-inch flat-screen display monitor, above left, and the older, smaller screen on the right, flank the sanctuary altar. Together, they enhance the congregation's viewing of information and graphics.