



GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's

Thought for the Month

"Prayer is the most beautiful expression of gratitude."

There have been a variety of religions in the world since ancient times – all with different doctrines and rituals. Some religions may be incompatible with others, but they all share a common element, which is prayer.

Only humans pray. In fact, prayer is one of the things that make us human. We feel the existence of a greater power that allows us to live, and we pay reverence to it with appreciation. This is prayer.

Every day, through prayer, we express our appreciation and respect to the Universal Life Force and our ancestors. This daily practice cultivates the sense of appreciation and respect more and more deeply within us.

It becomes the foundation of our true happiness and prosperity. This is why prayer is important in our lives.

OCTOBER 2022

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	Virtual – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	4	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	9	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	11		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	23	10:00 am	Appreciation / All Souls Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2		No Service
Sun	9	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	11		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	16	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Ujigami</i> Service Luncheon / Children's Halloween Costume Parade / Pumpkin-decorating Contest
Thu	20	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sat	22	11:00 am	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom

NOVEMBER 2022

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Tue	1	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	6	10:00 am	Virtual – "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	13	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Service
Thu-Fri	24 – 25		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)
Sun	27	10:00 am	Appreciation / Gedatsu Kongo Birthday 7-5-3 Children's Celebration TBD

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	6		No Service
Sun	13	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Thu	17	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	20	10:00 am	Appreciation Service 7-5-3 Children's Celebration and Luncheon
Thu-Fri	24 – 25		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)
Sat	26	11:00 am	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom



October “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. People of all faiths are welcome, so invite your friends and family members to attend. Even if you are unable to attend, you may still honor the soul of a loved one.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service **via YouTube** on **Sunday, October 2, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Clarence Aiona, Shane Holland, Motoji Ide, Shinji Kobayashi, Kazuko Nakayama, Yasuichi Sebe, Sadako Taketa** and **Yoshi Tanaka**.

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, October 9, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Teruko Arakawa, Richard Hiroshi Kikuchi, Tomiko Konishi, Suzuko Mallek, Mariko Michiuye, Kiyoko Nagahama, Hiroshi Nakaguchi, Shizuya Nakaguchi, Roger Setsuo Nishida, Peggy Ogawa, Takashi Okazaki, Toki Kotake Shiroishi, Harumi Tanji, Tsugio Tanji, Robert Toshiaki Tomita, and Mariko Maria Tsuruta**.

Renew Your Church Membership for 2023

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.



Children Ages 7, 5 and 3 to Be Celebrated

In November, Gedatsu members in Los Angeles and Sacramento will observe the *Shichi-Go-San* Festival, the traditional Japanese celebration for the well-being and healthy futures of children ages seven, five and three. So, if you have children, grandchildren, nieces/nephews of those ages, complete the application form available from your local church office to honor the children.

The 7-5-3 Celebration will be held on the following dates:
Los Angeles – Sunday, November 20
Sacramento – Sunday, November 27 TBD

For the L.A. Church celebration, children will receive the traditional *chitose ame* candy, protective amulet, and gift card from the Sunday School. Lunch will be served. A donation of \$25 is appreciated.

Later Start Time for Sacramento Sunday Services

Beginning in October, Sunday Services at the Sacramento Spiritual Center will begin at 10:00 a.m.

Year-End Membership Directory – Any Changes?

If you moved, changed your phone number, added or changed your email address, be sure to advise **Rev. Naoya Okano** or **Mariko Locheo** at the L.A. Church so that your correct information is published in the “Seasons Greetings” Membership Directory.

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.gedatsu@gmail.com, call at (626) 288-1212, or text at (626) 233-2359. Or email Mariko at locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com.

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 2023, complete the order form inserted in this newsletter and mail it by November 1 to your local church with your check for payment.

A Celebration of Thanks, Prayers

The 146th Grand Festival of the Gedatsu Church was held on Sunday, September 4, on the *Goreichi* Holy Grounds of the Sacramento Spiritual Center.

Members and friends turned out in near pre-pandemic numbers to celebrate the joyous event. Together, they expressed their appreciation and gratitude to the Universal Life Force and to the guardian spirits enshrined on the grounds.

The Festival included a prayer service in the *Gochi* Sanctuary, with offerings of flowers and holy tea to All Souls (photos, top two rows); a video address by Bishop Teruo Okano (page 5) and the ordination ceremony of Reverend Mica Rodriguez (page 4).

Twenty new souls were enshrined in the Memorial Tower Enshrinement Ceremony (photo, third row).

The Festival concluded with the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony (photo, at right), which invoked the power of the *Fudo-myo* Guardian Spirit.



Ordination Ceremony

American-born Mica Rodriguez Becomes Newest Minister



The Fall Festival was highlighted by the ordination ceremony of **Mica Rodriguez** as Gedatsu Church's newest minister. Reverend Mica completed her minister training this summer and received the approval of **Bishop Teruo Okano** and U.S. ministers. She will provide ministerial support, alongside **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe**, at the Sacramento Spiritual Center.

Reverend Mica addressed the Festival congregation, stating the following message:

"I know that, in many ways, my training has just begun, and I am very much looking forward to continuing my learning every day.

"Thank you so much for the ways that you help nurture and support me in this role. I am proud to be a part of this team and this family. I'm very excited to see all we will accomplish together and experience how we will positively impact the world with our study and commitment to growth, healing, and peace.

"Thank you very much for your confidence in me. I will do my best to serve honorably and make our community proud."



In the ordination ceremony Mica Rodriguez pledged to "cultivate and propagate the principles of Gedatsu," and Senior Reverend Akira Sebe proclaimed the ordination. Dave Ide, regional board chair, presented the certificate of ordination. Reverend Mica proudly displays the certificate and celebration flowers and cake.



Address by Bishop Teruo Okano
Grand Fall Festival – Sunday, September 4, 2022

Gedatsu USA members, greetings! Due to my tight schedule as chairman of *Gedatsu-kai* Japan, I am unable to attend your Fall Grand Festival today. It is very unfortunate that I cannot be with you, but please allow me to send this video message instead.

I am very happy that Gedatsu Church USA is able to celebrate its Fall Festival today. This event is possible due to the great blessings of the Universal Life Force, guardian angels, and Master Gedatsu Kongo. It is also a result of the hard work and dedicated efforts of the members. I sincerely thank you from my heart.

Together with a Community of Spirits

The spirits of all past teachers and members since the founding of Gedatsu Church USA have gathered on the spiritual grounds with great joy to celebrate the Fall Festival today. Also attending today are the spirits of Mr. Louis Ito and Mr. Rudy Tsujimura, who recently passed away, as well as the souls who are being enshrined in the Memorial Tower. They are all watching over you with great warmth and affection. I hope you enjoy today's celebration of love and appreciation together with this community of spirits.

Thoughts Create the World

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, *"The universe in its entirety is the manifestation of the Universal Life Force, and the Universal Life Force resides in the interior of all things."*

Every phenomenon that is currently in the world is the manifestation of the Divine Will. However, the Divine Will does not inflict hurt and suffering upon people.

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(Continued from page 5)

Gedatsu Kongo stated, *“The world is a creation of our minds.”* This means that the world we experience is the expression of our thoughts. We can create either a saint or a demon from a piece of wood, depending on the state of our minds. We are the creators of the world situation. Therefore, through the phenomena of the world, we have insight into the state of our minds. This is the love of the Divine Will and the power of the Universal Life Force.

The earth is not a playground for humans. The current state of our world shows that peace and hope can be tragically destroyed by a few selfish individuals, who think only of themselves.

No matter who they are, everyone wishes to live a happy life. However, if happiness benefits only some people and satisfies only their desires, they will never receive the blessing and love of the Universal Life Force.

Change Requires Will and Effort

In order to achieve world peace and bring about true happiness for all people, the Universal Life Force challenges us appropriately. By overcoming these challenges, we strengthen our will and cultivate our spirit, enabling us to persevere no matter the difficulties we may face. Unless we use our *own* hands . . . unless we put forth our *own* effort . . . we cannot create everlasting life and value. If humans do not comprehend their own value and purpose in life, their existence is fleeting.

Even though we are faced with many global challenges, such as the pandemic and climate change, we must build a more equitable, comprehensive and sustainable society for everyone.

Lead with Love and Prayer

In these unprecedented, changing times, many people are exploring their spirituality and discovering new ideas and values in anticipation of a future world. They may wonder, how will our world survive? The important question is, how, and in what direction, are we going to change? What is the state of our minds and hearts? What do we wish for our future?

Our founder, Master Gedatsu Kongo, taught us, *“Love is God and is power.”* I sincerely hope and pray that we are going toward love.

Prayer and love have the power to spread naturally to every corner of the world, relieving critical social conditions. Let us guide the people of the world with the power of love and with prayer.

New Minister, Strong Leader

In the midst of these difficult social situations, I have officially appointed a strong new leader, Ms. Micaela Rodriguez, as minister of Gedatsu Church USA. She has been trained under the guidance of Gedatsu Kongo, so I hope that she will fully apply her knowledge, abilities and talents for the growth of the church and the benefit of society.

I sincerely pray that you will be embraced by the love of the Universal Life Force and guided by Gedatsu Kongo.





Selected Quotes of Master Gedatsu Kongo - #17

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

- ☼ We are allowed to live by the Universal Life Force. Many people and everything in the world support and nurture us. It is a true wise person who knows this fact of life.
- ☼ We were born into this world because the Universal Life Force expected us to benefit the world.
- ☼ We humans demand too much. This attitude causes our worries and troubles.
- ☼ To abandon our egotistical thoughts is to sow a seed of a new person who will live a fruitful life.
- ☼ To help others is to be spiritually saved.
- ☼ The sun is shining even when we do not pray for it. The moon is shining even if we do not believe it. Such is the great blessing from the universe.
- ☼ Our prayer should be the expression of appreciation and gratitude.
- ☼ We are making good luck or bad luck through our attitude in daily life.
- ☼ There should be no religion apart from our daily living. We create hell or paradise through our daily living. If we don't like hell, we should do good for others and the world.
- ☼ The world is larger than just the USA. Our mind is larger than the world. Filling our mind with jealousy and meanness, what are we going to do?
- ☼ When we cannot get what we want, we suffer. When we lose what we have attained, we also suffer. Human desires are just like drinking salty water. The more we drink, the more we will thirst. Our thirst will never be relieved.
- ☼ By giving with appreciation, we can get more pleasure than by receiving.
- ☼ There is nothing meaningless in life. We can learn something important from anything we experience through life.
- ☼ The fatal mistake of the French Revolution was to ignore and reject tradition.
- ☼ Don't hold resentment, don't lament, don't fight, don't be arrogant. This is Gedatsu. If we can do this, we will be happy and prosperous.



Gedatsu Q&A - Part 28

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *When I watch the tragic situation of Ukraine on TV, I feel deeply sad. How can I contribute to the war's end and world peace?*

A When I read your question, I am reminded of the following story of Buddha, founder of Buddhism.

In his later years, Buddha met with tragedy. The Shaka clan, from the land of his origin, was attacked by a neighboring clan. His parents and families were all killed. A clansman reported this tragic news to the Buddha and asked him to retaliate against the enemy.

The Buddha replied, "Resentment will never stop resentment. Abandoning resentment will stop resentment eventually."

I believe these words sound very true when I observe the present world situation.

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, *"Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world. When you observe the present condition of the world, you see that egoism knows no bounds. If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper. This is because, when you make no demands, blessings are bestowed naturally upon you."*

Our founder encouraged us to be deeply aware that human beings are always self-centered. When we forget this, we blame others and do not think of our own selfishness. This will cause troubles and conflicts among people. This is true not only among individuals, but also is true among various groups and nations.

How can we get out of this vicious circle of resentment? By attacking and destroying our enemies? Absolutely not. It will bring about a chain of anger and bitterness. We will only then find another target to blame and attack again.

The only way to get out of the vicious circle of resentment and anger is to self-reflect. Examine ourselves closely and be aware of the selfishness, narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and exclusiveness inside us. We will then have the heart of understanding and forgiveness.



Hannya-shingyo, or the Heart Sutra, we always chant teaches that nothing can exist by itself. Everything is connected with each other and is supported by one another. Our present existence is connected with all people of different countries in the world, and all living things and natural environment on earth. When people truly understand this, they will be able to appreciate different people and cultures and live together with them harmoniously.

The present world has been swept away by division and antagonism. This will never lead to true world peace, because this is against the law of nature, which is harmony. When we deeply realize that we are connected with and supported by others, we will be able to find a key to the amicable settlement of the conflict. This is the first step toward world peace. We can do it!

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Q *What does the term “Gedatsu” mean? It seems too broad and profound for me to understand. Please explain its meaning in plain language.*

A Our views are always self-centered and biased, but it is not easy to be aware of our self-centeredness. That is why Master Gedatsu Kongo encouraged us to self-reflect and foster mutual understanding. This is the path toward world peace.

Our founder used the term “Gedatsu” in various ways. He attached many meanings to this word. We should understand the meaning of the word in its context.

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, *“The path of the universe is only one. The universe is unified under one law.”*

“Love is God, and it is power. Sincerity is also the essence of God. The pinnacle of every religion is not religious sectarianism at all. It is beyond religion and reaches God itself.”

There have been many religions in the world from ancient times. We may find differences among their doctrines, rituals, and symbols of worship. Some of them may look exclusive. However, looking deeply into them, we will surely be able to see a common ground.

Kongo firmly believed this. He called this universal basis of all beliefs “Gedatsu.” This universal truth has been expressed in various ways according to their historical, geographical, and cultural backgrounds. This is why there are various religions in the world.

When we look up at the sky, we will see no partitions. There is only a boundless sky. The universe is a whole world with no partition. We call this wholeness, the Universal Life Force. It is our self-centeredness that makes partitions in this boundless world. The cause of all conflicts among races, nations, and religious traditions is our egoism.

Master Gedatsu Kongo stated, *“Only when you meet people with your compassion and sincerity cultivated by religious practice, will you be able to truly move them. At this time, you are already beyond religious sectarianism.”*

This is the ultimate goal of our Gedatsu study. Sometimes we see people quarreling with people of other religions, saying, “Our religion is superior to yours. Our religion is the only truth.” Such narrow-mindedness has nothing to do with true religion. Religion is a boundless world of complete freedom.

The difference in doctrines and rituals does not matter at all. The most important element in our Gedatsu study is understanding and love. Such a heart will truly move people. We should learn to respect the differences among people. For example, in music, different notes make beautiful music; if all notes were the same, what results is not harmony but monotony. Variety is more than the spice of life. It is the very substance of meaningful existence.

When we respect all people in the world with an open heart, we will be able to foster mutual understanding. This belief will move all people, regardless of religions, nationalities, cultures, and traditions. This will be the first step toward world peace. This is Gedatsu.





Aztec Dance Group Celebrates Cosmic, Seasonal Changes and Honors Ancestors

This summer, the Sacramento Spiritual Center again hosted the Aztec Dance Troupe of Sacramento, a group of young men and women trained in dance based on ancient Indigenous Mexican cultural traditions. It was the second year that the troupe performed on the *Goreichi* grounds, invited by **Reverend Mica Rodriguez**, who was trained in Aztec dance. The performance was very successful, attracting participants from the wider Mexican dance community, including many of its elders.

The vibrant cultural ceremony showcased dance rituals that demand discipline and endurance. The dancers, dressed in ancient traditional apparel, moved in step with complicated patterns and rhythms throughout the day and into the night. Altar offerings, displayed outside the hospitality hall, honored ancestors and showed appreciation for blessings from the Universal Life force and the earth.

“Respect for ancestors and appreciation for the natural forces of the universe are traditions and values that are shared by both Gedatsu and Indigenous Mexican cultures,” says Reverend Mica. “It’s wonderful to see and experience the synergy between our two cultures and traditions.”



L.A. Church Store

The L.A. Gedatsu Church has opened a small store to sell various Gedatsu products and supplies. A conveniently located storage room at the front of the church provides a walk-up window in the sanctuary foyer, giving members easy access to purchase a variety of items.

According to store manager, **Ikuko Kuritani**, the store sells supplies of *amacha* holy tea, incense and candles; *Aji-kan* meditation images; various Gedatsu books, pamphlets and periodicals; protective amulets and more. The newest products are the black and royal-blue Gedatsu USA face masks.

In addition, completed application forms for *Saito Goma* plaques, Holy Tea plaques and *Manbu Kuyo* certificates can be submitted and paid for at the store.

The store is open on the second and third Sundays from 9:15 a.m. to 9:45 a.m., prior to the start of the Sunday services. Items may be purchased by cash, check and credit cards.

AUGUST 2022 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,991

General Donations: J. Tanaka, A/P Akashi, Anonymous, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M. Fukushima, R. Ide, S. Tanaka, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa, S/P Ito, S. Honda, Rikuto Kitajima (Japan), Rikiya Kitajima (Japan)

Special Acknowledgments

In memory of Louis Ito:	J. Ito (\$500), R. Ito, S. Taketa, A/P Akashi
S. Taketa	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura
Tomita/Akashi Family	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura
J. Ito	"Never Forgotten" for Nobuyoshi Ito, Mitsu Ito, Katherine Kazuye Sato

Southern California Total: \$14,422

General: M//M F. Barthel, M/M K. Chinen, M. Chinen, L. Chinn, K. Fujii, N. Fukute, J. Guerrero, M/M B. Hamamoto, M/M T. Hiram, B. Hori, M. Hori, T. Ikemoto, M/M M. Ishida, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, AIJO Nippon Kenpo, Rikiya Kitajima, Rikuto Kitajima, J. Kizu, M/M K. Kuritani, J. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, M. Naka, N. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, J. Shaklan, M/M S. Shaklan, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, M/M S. Shiroishi, F. Sueyoshi, N. Takara, G. Tokumoto, A. Tomita, G. Tomita, J. Tomita, C. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, A. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood

Special Acknowledgments

Y. Oishi	In memory of Masakazu Oishi
J. Ito	In memory of Nobuyoshi Ito, Mitsu Ito
T. Ishida	In memory of Shige Ishida
De. Shiroishi	In memory of Shizuye Shiroishi, Aaron Chodor, Shige Ishida
Do. Shiroishi	In memory of Shizuye Shiroichi, Aaron Chodor, Shige Ishida
M/M N. Chodor	In memory of Shizuye Shiroishi and Shige Ishida
J. Mah	In memory of Margaret Oyanagi
H. Taki	Appreciation for propagation USA (\$5,000)
P. Tomita	Tomita and Katako Family blessing
A. Yokota	Tomita and Katako Family blessing
N./Y. Okano	Safe trip to Japan
T./M. Hamada	In memory of Nora Ayako Toguchi
F. Sueyoshi	In memory of Nora Ayako Toguchi
In memory of Rudy Tsujimura:	M/M R. Allum, F. Barthel, M/M T. Fukushima, M/M D. Ide, K. Ishida, J. Ito (\$500), D. Kinoshita, B. Kumagai, M. Kumagai, J. Mah. C. Motoike, D. Mukai, J. Reid, M./J. Shaklan, M. Shiroishi, M/M S. Shiroishi, R. Siu, P. Tomita, S. Tsuno, G.S. Yamada
In memory of Louis Ito:	Jackson Ito (\$500), D. Mukai, J./A./U. Shiroishi, T. Ishida, K. Ishida, M. Wong

Online Donations: Total: \$1,072

General: S. Matsumoto, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, M/M P. Reid, M. Sakai, G. Hass

Special Acknowledgments

D. Yamada	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura
S. Yamanaka	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura
C. Oshiro	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura
J. Reid	In memory of Louis K. Ito

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Judy Okimura** of the L.A. Gedatsu Church. Although she resides in Austin, Texas, she spends a great deal of time with her father and long-time Gedatsu member, **Tom Okimura**, in Southern California.

Judy has fond memories of **Bishop Kishida** and other church elders, who have tremendously influenced her. She looks forward to attending the L.A. Gedatsu Church under **Rev. Naoya Okano** and getting to know the L.A. members better.

Judy worked at several State of Texas agencies, including the Texas Education Agency, from which she retired. Her interests and hobbies revolve around art and marine life.

Editorial Staff

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Rev. Naoya Okano, adviser

Rev. Mica Rodriguez, adviser

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Dave Ide, **Marie Ishida**, **Mark Ishida**, **Judy Okimura**, **Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi**, **Deacon June Tanaka**

Congratulations, Reverend Mica!



Members pose for a group photo following a special celebration dinner for Reverend Mica (front row, with lei), expressing their delight and support for her ordination as our newest minister.