



# GEDATSU COMPANION

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### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Gedatsu is to shape our minds  
to align with the Universal Law."*

Everything has its cause, good or bad. Nothing comes from nothing. We are all born from our parents, and they, from their parents.

When we have problems, we should reflect on ourselves first and try to find out their causes within us. When we attempt to correct what must be corrected, we can make improvements.

No matter what difficulties we may have in life now, if we self-reflect and try to improve ourselves, we can change our life in a positive direction.

The key to changing our lives positively is appreciation. We must be thankful to be alive and try our best to fulfill our duties each day. We will then be able to live a fulfilling life.

## OCTOBER 2023

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	8	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	10		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
		7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	22	10:00 am	Appreciation and All Souls Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1		No Service
Sun	8	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	10		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	15	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Ujigami</i> Service / Luncheon
			Children's Halloween Costume Parade
Thu	26	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom

## NOVEMBER 2023

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	14	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Thu – Fri	23 – 24		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)
Sun	26	10:00 am	Appreciation / Gedatsu Kongo Birthday 7-5-3 Children's Celebration

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5		No Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Thu	16	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	19	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / 7-5-3 Children's Celebration and Luncheon
Thu – Fri	23 – 24		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)



### 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.

For health reasons, the Sacramento Spiritual Center postponed its September “Never Forgotten Memorial Service.” **Therefore, both the September and October services will be held jointly on Sunday, October 1, at 10 a.m.,** honoring the following souls. For September: **Robert Katsumi Fukushima, Glenn Shuji Hatae, Linda Carol Kashiwagi, Shigetaro Kino, Teruko Kino, Soichi Nakatani, Masako Sakamoto Tagawa, and Tetsuo Yomogida.** For October: **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 8, 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, Harumi Tanji, Tsugio Tanji, Robert Toshiaki Tomita, and Mariko Maria Tsuruta.**

### Renew Your Church Membership for 2024

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](http://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 19

Sacramento – Sunday, November 26 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.

### Update Your Contact Information

To protect the privacy of members’ personal information, the year-end membership directory will no longer be published and distributed.

However, to keep you apprised of the latest church communications and announcements, member contact information will still be maintained by the Los Angeles and Sacramento church offices. Therefore, please notify the L.A. Church of any changes to your home address, email address, phone/cellphone numbers by December 1. Email **Rev. Naoya** at [naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com](mailto:naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com), call at (626) 288-1212, or text at (626) 233-2359. Or email **Mariko Locheo** at [locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com](mailto: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 2024, 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 Community with Thanks and Prayers

The 148<sup>th</sup> Grand Festival of Gedatsu Church USA was held on Sunday, September 3, on the *Goreichi* Holy Grounds of the Sacramento Spiritual Center.

Enjoying unseasonably cool breezes, members and friends gathered to celebrate the joyous event, expressing their appreciation and gratitude to the Universal Life Force and guardian spirits enshrined on the grounds. They joined with their ancestral spirits and the souls of pioneer members, who helped to establish the church nearly 75 years ago.



The Fall Festival (photos at left) began with Program I in the *Gochi* Sanctuary. With friendly, witty banter, Joy Sebe chaired the program, aided by her son Noah, 13.

Noting that the Festivals have long been an opportunity to express appreciation for Native American ancestral spirits, Joy asked the congregation to join in recognizing the Miwok and Nisenan people, the original stewards of the *Goreichi* land. [Read more on page 6.]

Members of the Los Angeles and Sacramento Regional Board were introduced, as well as members of the Board of Directors. Joy acknowledged newly elected Board chairman Mark Ishida, who succeeds Joyce Reid. Joyce was recognized for her 7-year service as Board chair with a floral bouquet and words of appreciation. [See page 6.]

The Gedatsu prayer service included offerings of flowers and holy tea to All Souls. Processional participants, pictured left to right. *Ochigo* children: Hunter and Aurora Chodor, Meika Hensley, Ryunosuke and Nanami Okano. Flower bearers: Courtney Ide, Ryann Young, Avery Bridgham, Vivian McSwain, Gwen Ramey, and Diana Locheo. *Amacha* bearers: Avalon Akashi, Toyoko Murakami, Sachiyo Matsumoto, Yoko Oishi, Robyn Santander, and Kari Kuritani.

Ten new souls were enshrined in the Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower Enshrinement Ceremony, chaired by Senior Deacon Jackson Ito.

The Fall Festival concluded with the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony, which invoked the power of the *Fudo-myo* Guardian Spirit. The ceremony was officiated by Senior Reverend Akira Sebe. The program was chaired by Pauline Tomita.



Festival Address by **Reverend Shigehiro Kizaki**  
Director of Propagation, *Gedatsu-kai* Japan

Hello, U.S. Gedatsu members, and congratulations on your Fall Grand Festival. I am Shigehiro Kizaki, director of the Propagation Department of *Gedatsu-kai* Japan. On behalf of Bishop Teruo Okano and *Gedatsu-kai* Japan, I would like to say a few words on this festive occasion.

In my video message at the Spring Festival this year, I quoted Gedatsu Kongo, who said that the Grand Festival is “the event of the highest honor.” The event is of the highest honor, because the Gedatsu grand festival is when we join together with our ancestors and all the souls of our church pioneers in showing our appreciation for the life we have.

I am truly happy that I can join you in “the event of the highest honor” at this time. I would like to thank Bishop Okano and everyone who contributed to today’s festival.

Today, I would like to talk about the relationship between the Universal Life Force, or God, and ourselves.

Let me share the story of a Japanese master fabric-dyeing artisan, who was considered a living national treasure. He was an expert in making organic dyes, using natural plants as a catalyst.

One fall day, after a typhoon had knocked down a number of large cherry trees, the artisan was asked if he would be interested in using the cherry blossoms from those trees to make his dyes.

Japanese people have a special affinity for cherry blossoms, so the artisan had a long-held desire to make dyes from cherry blossoms. However, it was believed that, unlike other trees, once cherry trees are pruned, their blossoms die. Therefore, he never had an opportunity to obtain cherry blossoms.

Consequently, when he was told that there were fallen cherry trees, he immediately went to get the blossoms. With great excitement, he used the cherry blossoms as a catalyst in his dye and was able to create a beautiful cherry blossom-colored fabric for a kimono.

The kimono was so beautiful that he could never forget the color. Since then, he desperately searched for other cherry blossoms, even in his dreams, but he never had another opportunity to obtain the blossoms.

**The Gedatsu Grand Festival is the event of the highest honor because it is when we join together with our ancestors and all the souls of our church pioneers in showing our appreciation for the life we have.**

One spring day, after another typhoon, he was contacted about a fallen cherry blossom tree. Again, he eagerly made a dye from the cherry blossoms. This time, however, the color of the kimono fabric turned vivid green.

The noted fabric-dyeing artisan, who is said to be the finest in Japan, was unable to create the same natural colors he had created before, even though he followed the same steps. After thinking deeply about this, he realized that the color difference was the season when the blossoms were obtained. He recognized that even though two cherry blossoms appear the same to the human eye, cherry blossoms obtained in the fall contain the color to sprout blossoms the following spring, and a spring cherry blossom contains the color for fresh green leaves in the summer. Depending on the season, the same cherry tree contains different elements within itself. Those differences are the function of Nature and the blessings of the Universal Life Force.

The movement of Nature, or the function of the Universal Life Force, is not a distant thing, but something we can see all around us. Whether or not we realize this makes all the difference in our lives.

*(Continued on page 5)*



**The movement of Nature, or the function of the Universal Life Force, is not a distant thing, but something we can see all around us. Whether or not we realize this makes all the difference in our lives.**

Master Gedatsu Kongo said, “In this world, there is a divine sphere and a human sphere. The divine sphere is where the Universal Life Force operates, and the human sphere is where humans operate.”

He explained, “Farming is a good example. When a farmer has a bumper crop, he boasts about it, but when it’s a bad harvest, he complains about the weather. We must not forget that we are allowed to play a part in Nature. We cultivate the soil and plant seeds. Seeds must be in season to sprout. We must understand the nature of seeds and plant them in accordance with the Universal Law. These are within the human sphere. The rest is within the divine sphere: allowing rain to fall, moisten the earth, sprout the seeds, and grow and harvest them, as well as pollinating plants by wind and insects. These are all within the sphere of the Universal Life Force.

“Infants are the same. Pregnancy and delivery are the functions of the Universal Life Force. The mother gives love to the fetus in her womb, so it doesn’t get too warm, or too cold, or become hungry. That is the human part. Allowing the fetus to grow in the mother’s womb, creating its organs to see and hear, and teeth to grow naturally. These are within the divine sphere.

“Unless we acknowledge these divine functions, we make ourselves suffer more than necessary. Understand that both our efforts and help from the Universal Life Force are necessary to make things happen and accept divine help as a blessing of Nature. We will then live to our fullest potential.”

Our daily lives are within the function of the Universal Life Force. We need to realize this function. When we do so, we naturally appreciate this divine function and live our lives in accordance with the Universal Law. True happiness is, then, naturally given to us. We will be blessed with good fortune and, when appropriate, will encounter those who will help us to improve ourselves.

**Understand that both our efforts and help from the Universal Life Force are necessary to make things happen and accept divine help as a blessing of Nature.**

I believe that Master Gedatsu Kongo preached the Gedatsu teaching so that all of us would be blessed with good fortune.

To deepen our understanding of the Gedatsu teaching, we need a sensitivity to perceive the true nature of things, continually reflect to get answers, take concrete actions, and practice fundamental humility. Humility, in my opinion, is especially important. Gedatsu Kongo emphasized the importance of the “practice of humility.” This is the same as Steve Jobs’ saying, “Stay Foolish,” in his commencement address at Stanford University in 2005.

The Gedatsu teaching is not that someone makes us happier. Gedatsu teaches that blessings naturally come by adapting ourselves to divine will and living according to the Universal Law. Moreover, if we wish to be blessed, we must study the Gedatsu teaching and make every effort to make people around us happier. This is the desire of the Universal Life Force and Master Gedatsu Kongo’s hope for us.

Thank you very much.



### Appreciation Expressed for Native American Ancestral Spirits

In her opening remarks in Program I of the Fall Festival, **Joy Sebe** asked the congregation to take a moment to recognize and thank the Indigenous People, who are the original stewards of the land of Sacramento and Los Angeles Gedatsu Churches. She noted that the Sacramento *Goreichi* is on the land of the **Miwok** and **Nisenan People**, and the L.A. Gedatsu Church in South San Gabriel is on the traditional lands of the **Tongva People**. Because an important part of the teachings of the Gedatsu Church is expressing appreciation for our ancestors, Joy explained, it is appropriate that we acknowledge and express thanks for the Native American ancestral spirits.

The Gedatsu Churches plan to regularly acknowledge the land and pay respects to Native ancestral spirits as part of our Gedatsu programs and services, as well as actively support Native peoples, their culture, and communities.

To find the Native Tribes of the land where you live, go to: <https://native-land.ca/> Also, read explanation, "Why It Matters": <https://native-land.ca/about/why-it-matters/>

### Outgoing Board Chairman Recognized

With the change in leadership of the church Board of Directors earlier this year, the Fall Festival congregation graciously recognized – with thanks and a lovely floral bouquet – the contributions made by **Joyce Reid** to the church during her seven-year tenure as chairman of the Board. Surprised and overwhelmed by the gesture, Joyce acknowledged the tremendous support, trust, and understanding she received from members, ministers, and fellow directors, which enabled the Board to work on their behalf. Calling the role of chair both a “challenge and privilege,” Joyce said she prayed daily to the spirits of Gedatsu Kongo and Bishop Kishida for guidance in making sound decisions to grow the church and benefit the Gedatsu community. Joyce also thanked her husband **Paul** for his indispensable support, patience, and good humor during her tenure.

**Mark Ishida** of the L.A. Church succeeds Joyce as chairman of the board.

*The following installment of Gedatsu Q&A concludes the long-running Gedatsu study series, written and contributed by **Reverend Hisakazau Taki**. Its purpose, says Rev. Taki, is “to demonstrate the application of Gedatsu doctrine and principles in our everyday activities.”*

*We deeply thank Rev. Taki for generously giving his time and efforts to share his knowledge and understanding of Gedatsu, which helps us to deepen our appreciation for the teaching.*

*Companion Editors*

## Gedatsu Q&A - Part 40

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

**Q** *Can you explain to me the fourth part of the Prayer Book, “Supplication?”*

**A** In “Supplication,” we say:

*“With respectful and sincere hearts, we dedicate ourselves to the practice of Gedatsu. We ask Master Gedatsu Kongo to guide us as we follow his example to live with appreciation and gratitude and to be of service to all.”*

Master Gedatsu Kongo is the founder of our Gedatsu Church. He established the Gedatsu teaching that we study and practice every day. Through practicing Gedatsu, we can enjoy meaningful lives. As his disciples, we pay respect to him and thank him for his guidance. We then promise him to follow his teaching and try to benefit the world through our daily duties and activities.

We then say, “*Namu Gedatsu Kongo*,” which means, “I pay respect to Master Gedatsu Kongo, and follow his teaching sincerely.” Reciting these words seven times, we sincerely express our gratitude and respect to him.

*(Continued on back page)*

### **Northern California** Total: \$8,112

General Donations: J. Tanaka, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M. Lumpkin, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa, T. Arase

#### Special Acknowledgments

J. Ito	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$3,000)
A. Sebe	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$3,000)
J. Ito	"Never Forgotten" for Nobuyoshi Ito, Mitsu Ito, and Katherine Sato
J. Ito	Appreciation and gratitude to <i>Benzaiten</i>
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation and gratitude to <i>Benzaiten</i>
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation and gratitude to <i>Benzaiten</i>

### **Southern California** Total: \$4,340

General: A. Tsujimura, D. Shiroishi, F. Sueyoshi, H. Taki (\$500), J. Hamamoto, J. Ito, J. Kaku, K. Fujii, M. Kojoori, M. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M B. Shimasaki, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M K. Chinen, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M M. Hamada, M/M N. Okano, M/M P. Young, M/M T. Hiram, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Ishida, T. Murakami, T. Okimura, Y. Oishi.

#### Special Acknowledgments

J. Mah	In memory of Margaret Masako Oyanagi
T. Ishida	In memory of Shige Ishida
J. Ito	In memory of Nobuyoshi Ito and Mitsu Ito
Do. Shiroishi	In memory of Shizuye Shiroishi, Shige Ishida, Aaron Chodor, and Eryn Nakamura
Y. Oishi	In memory of Masakazu Oishi
S. Matsumoto	In memory of Junji Nakaguchi and Shoji Kusumoto
M/M M. Hamada	In memory of Nora Ayako Toguchi
C. Tsujimura	In memory of Charles Stoner
M/M S. Shiroishi	In memory of Shizuye Shiroishi, Shige Ishida, Aaron Chodor, and Eryn Nakamura
P. Shaklan	Car appreciation
M/M N. Chodor	In memory of Shizuye Shiroishi, Shige Ishida, Aaron Chodor, and Eryn Nakamura
M/M N. Okano	Safe vacation in Japan
D. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$334

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

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



**Thank you to the many Gedatsu USA Church members and friends who responded with their hearts and pocketbooks over the past weeks to raise more than \$3,500 for Maui Wildfire Relief. These monies will be combined with donations from the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii and will be donated through the "Maui Strong Fund" as Gedatsu Church's support for the recovery of communities and families on Maui. Thank you and Mahalo.**

GEDATSU CHURCH USA  
www.gedatsu-usa.org



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **James Akashi**, the son of Bay Area Gedatsu members **Pauline Tomita** and **Alaric Akashi**. His grandparents are the late **Robert** and **Dottie Tomita**. Age 21, James graduated in May with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Animation from Loyola Marymount

University. He plans to pursue a career in accounting at an animation company.

In his free time, James enjoys weightlifting, writing short stories, and drawing.

#### Editorial Staff

**Joyce Reid**, Editor

**Reverend Naoya Okano**, adviser

**Reverend Mica Rodriguez**, adviser

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**James Akashi**, **Allison Horner**, **Dave Ide**, **Mark Ishida**,  
**Mariko Locheo**, **Rev. Hisakazu Taki**, **Deacon June Tanaka**,  
**Pauline Tomita**

#### *(Gedatsu Q&A – Continued from page 6)*

**Q** *In the Gedatsu Church, we perform Amacha blessing by chanting the Heart Sutra. What does it mean?*

**A** *Amacha* holy tea blessing is one of the unique, sacred practices of the Gedatsu Church, 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, on which souls are invited to receive the blessing. Through practicing holy tea blessing, we express sincere gratitude to all souls and spirits who support our existence such as ancestors, living things, etc. When we perform holy tea blessing, we usually chant the Heart Sutra, or *Hannyashingyo*. The Heart Sutra is the best-known and most popular of the Buddhist scriptures. The fundamental concept of this sutra is

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interconnectivity of all things. Once we understand that everything in this world is interconnected and that nothing can exist by itself, we become aware of our own relationship to everyone and all things. We will then be grateful for the infinite blessings we receive from everyone and all things. By chanting the Heart Sutra, we express gratitude to them all for their great blessings.

**Q** *Can you explain what Gedatsu means in a single phrase?*

**A** Gedatsu is to be aware that we receive the infinite blessing from everyone and all things in the universe, and express sincere gratitude for them all. We then try to benefit the world as a token of appreciation through our daily activities. This is Gedatsu.

