

GEDATSU COMPANION



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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Gedatsu is to radically change
our way of life and
to live with appreciation."*

Everyone desires happiness, but how many people truly find satisfaction in life? Many people complain about their lives. Please consider why. Those who are not satisfied with their life may not be aware of the blessings they are receiving from everyone and everything – divine blessings, blessings from ancestors, help from family and friends, blessings of nature, social benefits, etc.

We receive immeasurable blessings from everything . . . every day. When we become aware of the multitude of blessings we receive, we will be thankful to be alive. Whether we are happy or not depends on our attitude.

JANUARY 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mon	1	9:00 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	7	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	14	10:00 am	First Service of the Year
Tue	16		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
		7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	28	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mon	1	8:30 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	7	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	14	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	16		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Thu	18	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	21	10:00 am	New Year Appreciation Service
Sun	28	10:00 am	Ajikan Meditation Practice

FEBRUARY 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	11	10:00 am	Sun Spirit Service
Tue	13	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting – via Google Meet
Tue	20		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
Sun	25	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	11	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	18	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Sun Spirit Service
Tue	20		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
Thu	22	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	25	10:00 am	Ajikan Meditation Practice



January “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.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, January 7, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Richard Aadland, Natsuko Furukawa, Jane Kaoru Ide, Hatsuko Mishima, Teru Nakayama, Teiichiro Noritake, Bernard Sakamoto, Fudeyo Sekikawa, Genkichi Sekikawa, Tsuneko Sekikawa, Yoshiko Sekikawa, Machi Takagi, Taro Takemura, Rose Yamamoto, and Kenneth Kenichiro Yasuda.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, January 14, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **David H. Dyson III, Richard Higashi, Sanshiro Hiram, Aileen T. Hirayama, Terry Teruko L. Imuta, Elaine Rose Kaproff, Takako Karplus, Walter Karplus, Yoshihiko Kitagawa, Tadashi Thomas Matsumoto, Kazuko Matsuura, Kiyoko Michiue, Konami Miyakawa, Frank Miyamura, Asaye Mizuki, Fumi Murakami, Katsuyo Nagao, Hisano Nakamura, Misuko Nakamura, Mohei Nakamura, Hiroko Notoya, Chika Okimura, Motoichi Okimura, Leah O'Leary, Eiko Onishi, Chiyoko Sato, Grace Yuko Sato, Sandra Sea Cat, Moto Tanji, Saburo Tanji, Dennis Koichi Toguchi, Masako Tokashiki, Nobuko Tsujimura, Sumiko Tsujimura, Frank Itaru Tsukamaki, Kenneth Kenichiro Yasuda, Noriko Yoshihara, and Frank Young.**

Obituary

The Gedatsu Church mourns the passing of long-time L.A. Church member, **Loretta (Lori) Tsujimura**, who passed away on October 20. After beating cancer, she developed other medical issues, which proved to be too much to overcome. She was 79 years old. Lori is survived by her husband, **Hisato**; their children, **Traci Palelek** and **Mark Tsujimura**; four grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews.

Have You Renewed Your Church Membership?

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.

Donate to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

Membership dues and donations help to ensure the day-to-day operations of our church. Donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund give the church an additional boost – providing sustaining dollars that help us achieve our longer-range plans for growth and development.

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. Complete the application form that is available at your local church office.

Renew Your Holy Paper Plaques

The new year is the time to renew your holy paper plaques for placement throughout the home for the protection of our dwellings and happiness of its inhabitants. See your local church branch for details on types of plaques, prices and order form.

Return Your Old Holy Tea Plaques

If you ordered new holy tea plaques for the new year, the church urges you to show the proper respect for your old plaques. Give prayers of appreciation to your old plaques, wash and dry them thoroughly, then return them to your local church. They will be burned in a plaque-burning service in Sacramento.

Yamadas to Retire, Start “New Chapter”

After more than ten years serving Gedatsu Church USA and three years at the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii, **Reverend Kazuo Yamada** and **Yoko Yamada** will retire from the church ministry and return to Japan in January.

“With our hearts full of gratitude and a storehouse of wonderful memories, Yoko and I say ‘*sayonara*’ to the many close friends we have made in Los Angeles, Sacramento, and Hawaii,” said Rev. Yamada. “We look forward to returning to Japan and starting a new chapter in our lives.

“The joyful memories of our years in America and the many experiences we have shared with you have become precious treasures and a source of pride in our hearts. We will never forget the kindness and love you have shown us.

“We extend our sincere appreciation to each one of you. God bless you.”



Reverend Kazuo Yamada and Yoko Yamada



Let's
Celebrate
Together!

This year, 2024, we observe the 75th anniversary of our Gedatsu Church in America. Mark your calendars to join us for our celebration festivities on Sunday, September 1, at our Fall Grand Festival in Sacramento. Watch for more information in the coming months.



Celebrating Our Children

In November, L.A. Church members and friends observed the annual 7-5-3 Festival, or *Shichi-Go-San*, the traditional Japanese celebration for the well-being and healthy futures of children. Parents of children ages seven, five, and three years gave thanks at the *Ujigami* local guardian shrine and altar for the divine protection and guidance their children receive. **Reverend Naoya Okano** gave the children traditional *chitose-ame* candy – *chitose* literally meaning a thousand years.

Also, as part of the Sunday Service, the congregation offered flowers (below) to the spirit of **Master Gedatsu Kongo** in remembrance of his birthday and memorial anniversary.



Continuing 12-Part Series

A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Translated and Condensed by **Rev. H. Taki**

Chapter 3

The Darkness of Despair

In the spring of 1905, at the age of 23, Eizo Okano (Gedatsu Kongo) returned home from Korea after a year of separation from his family. He apologized to his parents for causing them to worry for his long absence. He then performed his duties to his parents, engaging in farming and, once again, entering the revived subcontract weaving business on a full scale.

In those days, Japanese spinning and weaving factories – managed and financed by big capital – bought many foreign-produced power looms for wide cloth, increasing the production of cotton textiles and threatening the subcontract weaving. In discussing the business crisis, Eizo and his business friends concluded that they should merge their business to compete with big enterprises.

Joining forces to compete

Thus, the Cotton Textiles Association was organized in November of 1906, initially consisting of twelve businessmen, with Eizo elected as one of its three directors. Its purpose was to produce cotton textiles as cheaply as possible.

At that time, Eizo was in love with a girl named Aki Kamishiro. She was a *geisha* and 18 years old. She and Eizo fell in love at first sight, when she was hired to a party of the cotton textiles businessmen at a restaurant. Since then, Eizo visited the restaurant frequently, engaging Aki every time.

Market pressures

In January of 1907, the stock market declined substantially, and business activity suddenly deteriorated and worsened through the year. The ordinary weaving companies, whose markets were limited to the domestic areas, were getting pinched.

By November, the businesses decided to dissolve the association. Despite that, Eizo, was determined to carry on the business. However, saddled with considerable debts, he found that the harder he worked, the more the deficits mounted.

A fateful decision

With his back against the wall, an idea occurred to Eizo: he could survive by selling cotton textiles to the wholesaler without paying the consumption tax for textiles. Eizo decided to put that idea into action.

Like many businessmen, Eizo reasoned that the consumption tax for textiles was only a special emergency tax enacted during the Russo-Japanese War and was likely to be lifted. Its continuance after the war was highly unpopular, leading to tax revolts.

Despite public sympathy for abolishing the tax, five months later, in May of 1908, two police officers arrived at Eizo's home, confronting him with the words: "You are Eizo Okano, aren't you? You are suspected of tax evasion." They took Eizo to the police station.

An intensive investigation started that day. Eizo stated everything honestly. His father, Makitaro, came to see him. Looking totally worn out, he said, "What a shameful thing you did! I am ashamed to my ancestors." Filled with remorse and profound regret, Eizo begged his father's pardon on his knees.

A heavy price to pay

Over the coming months, Eizo's tax-evasion trial started, was postponed and was delayed several times, much to Eizo's irritation. Meanwhile, the Okano family faced serious matters. In Eizo's absence, creditors pressured Makitaro, forcing him to assume all of Eizo's debts himself. Shocked, Eizo pleaded with his father, "Don't do it, please. I am to blame for everything."

With his entire body trembling, Makitaro shouted back, "You fool! Who can watch his son falling without helping?"

(Continued on page 5)

(Biography – Continued from page 4)

“Please forgive me!” Eizo replied, kneeling before his father and tears falling, not able to raise his head.

By February, all debts were paid off. Eizo felt that he had destroyed everything his father had built up through unimaginable hardship. “I ruined all the efforts of Father’s life.”

Eizo cleaned his house and burned all unnecessary things. He then visited the Okano house. Having dinner with the family, Eizo really felt the warmth of the family. He thanked all the family and said goodbye. He apologized to Makitaro by bowing with his hands on the floor saying, “I am very sorry to have caused you much trouble because of my faults. Please forgive me.”

Makitaro nodded slightly and said, “It’s all over. This is the loss of the Okano family, after all. So, there is nothing wrong with my paying the debts.” Listening to his words, Eizo could not hold back his tears.

Three letters

Eizo returned to his home, where he wrote three letters. The first letter was to his parents (see letter below). “Thank you very much for your love and kindness until today. I will never forget what you have done for me. I shall be born again as an eternal spirit for the family.”

He then wrote to his brother Kakutaro. “This is all the result of my stupidity. I will return to life again as an immortal spirit. After my rebirth, I will dedicate myself to my family. Please devote yourself to our parents and take care of your brothers after I die.”

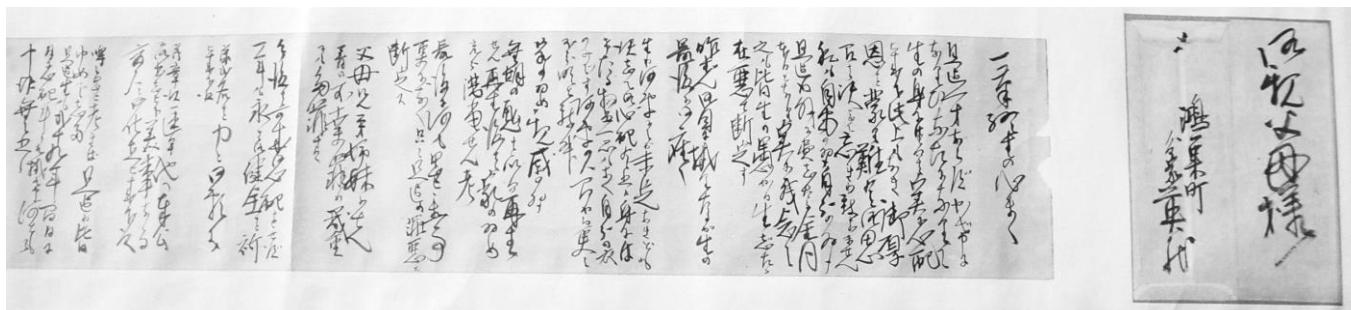
Resolved to die

Lastly, Eizo wrote to one of his relatives, so the reasons for his suicide could be explained to his relatives. “I am really sorry that I could not make up for my loss. That was all my fault. A nation’s war is not actual fighting alone. The daily war in business is very important for the country, too. Reflecting on myself now, I am completely defeated. I cannot help it. Please understand my situation.”

After he finished writing the letters, Eizo put them in envelopes, placed them on a desk and calmly closed his eyes. Presently, he heard a voice in the entrance. “Eizo, are you here? May I come in?” Makitaro came in the room. He found the letters and read them.

“You fool!” he shouted, slapping Eizo’s face with all his might. Straining his voice, he spoke from the bottom of his heart, “Listen carefully, Eizo. You can kill yourself at any time you like. Instead, why don’t you try to survive to the end?”

(Continued on page 6)



Eizo Okano, at the age of 29, resolved to kill himself because of the indescribable misfortunes he had brought upon his family. In what he believed would be his last communication to his parents, he wrote: “Thank you very much for your great help and kindness until today. I shall never forget what you have done for me. I am truly sorry that I have lost a great deal of money and caused the family much trouble. I conclude that all of these misfortunes have been caused by my stupidity.” As he wrote his parting words, his resolution became firm – “I shall be born again as an eternal soul for the family and relatives. After my rebirth, I shall never fail to support the family.”

(Biography – continued from page 5)

Saved by a father's love and understanding

His words touched Eizo's heart deeply. Tears flowed. Eizo tried to apologize to his father on his knees, but he choked on his words. Makitaro placed his hands on Eizo's shoulders and nodded without uttering a word.

Eizo abandoned the idea of killing himself. He was resolved to wait for the decision of the court and make a fresh start as if he had been given a second chance at life.

Finally, the court decision was pronounced on April 7. Guilty. Eizo was ordered to pay his fine (over 600 yen) in installments over 15 years – more lenient than he had expected. However, Tokyo was in the throes of an economic depression, and Eizo had difficulty finding a good job under the difficult situation. Once again, Eizo found himself in a tight corner.

More economic hardships

In order to pay the court fine and cost of the trial in installments, Eizo embarked on a series of failed business ventures and jobs in various businesses. He lost his money in the ice-making business. He was hired by a toothpaste factory, but his wages were insufficient to pay his trial fees. A job with a freight-forwarding agency barely covered his daily subsistence.

With his living standards at their lowest level, he supported himself by day labor – often resorting to heavy labor or deplorable conditions. He had no regular residence, staying at cheap lodging houses.

Still, the lowliest job was better than none. At least, Eizo could have a meal, stay at a lodging house, and sleep, rolling himself up in thin blankets. But at times, when he failed to get a job, he did not have enough money to eat and was forced to sleep under an elevated railway or on a park bench.

A homeless existence

Eizo later spoke of this period in his life. "Once, when I was jobless, I wandered about town without eating for three days. I can never forget that."

With few clothes to wear, he often spent days with nothing but the clothes on his back, whether they were dirty or torn. His hair and mustache grew long. He could not remember when he had last taken a bath.

The value of adversity

Such were Eizo's dreadful circumstances when New Year 1910 arrived. With nothing to eat, Eizo spent the first three days of the year drinking water only. He began to stay around Ueno at that time and got acquainted with those who were under similar circumstances.

Later, reflecting back on those days, Eizo stated, "When I was leading a homeless life, I could survive on only five *sen* a day. Two *daifuku-mochi* with salted bean jam and water were enough for me to survive.

"Man should experience this kind of life of extreme poverty. You can truly never experience heart-to-heart relationships and the essence of humanity among the common people without going through adversity."

One day, Eizo heard about a job at the harbor. He went there and found many dock workers energetically unloading ships. After visiting one of the shipping agents, "Uchida Kinzo Store," Eizo was hired. The next day, he and other dock workers assembled to perform the very hard work of unloading cargo from barges. Although he had always prided himself on his strength, Eizo was too tired to stand up.

As he became accustomed to the work, Eizo began to build a wide circle of acquaintances. He enjoyed having open relations with the workers. He thought, "I lost everything. It may be interesting to stake my life for this world."

By the spring of 1910, Eizo's homeless life was over. A new stage of his life was emerging.

(Next month: "The World of Shipping")



NOVEMBER 2023 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$14,420

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

Special Acknowledgments

A. Sebe	Goreichi Maintenance Fund (\$8,000)
J. Ito	Goreichi Maintenance Fund (\$3,000)
A. Sebe	In memory of Lori Tsujimura by Hisato Tsujimura (\$500)
M/M J. Horner	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Service
L. Tomita	In memory of Shizue Kodani
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for November Appreciation Service
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation to Gedatsu Kongo
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation for Appreciation Service
A. Sebe	In memory of Sueko Matsumoto by Ritsuko Nakatani
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for Appreciation/Gedatsu Kongo Service
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation for Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Service

Southern California Total: \$2,150

General: Anonymous, D. Shiroishi, J. Addler, J. Hamamoto, J. Ito, J. Shiroishi, K. Fujii, M/M C. Morioka, M/M D. Mah, M/M M. Maekawa, M/M N. Okano, M/M P. Young, M/M S. Shiroishi, M/M T. Hiram, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Ishida, T. Murakami, T. Taguchi

Special Acknowledgments

J. Hamamoto	Appreciation for Ben Hamamoto Service
J. Kaku	"Never Forgotten" for George Imuta
T. Ishida	"Never Forgotten" for Hitoshi/ Fumio Ishida
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	For Gedatsu Kongo birthday
M/M K. Kuritani	Gedatsu Kongo memorial service
J. Kaku	Gedatsu Kongo memorial service

Online Donations: Total: \$829

General: G. Iwata, D. Allum, S. Shiroishi, A. Morioka, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

Special Acknowledgments

M/M N. Okano	Appreciation for <i>Shichi-Go-San</i> for Ryunosuke and Nanami
C. Sunahara	In memory of Masao and Fujiko Taketa

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

2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

March

- 16 (Sat) Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom at 10 a.m.
- 17 (Sun) L.A. *Higan* Service
- 24 (Sun) Sacramento *Higan* Service

April

- 7 (Sun) Spring Grand Festival 9:30 am

May

- 12 (Sun) Sacramento Mother's Day Service
- 19 (Sun) L.A. Mother's Day Service
- 26 (Sun) Sacramento plaque burning
- 28 (Tue) Churches Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

June

- 9 (Sun) Sacramento Mother Kiyota Memorial / Father's Day Service
- 16 (Sun) L.A. Father's Day Service

July

- 4 (Thu) Church Closed (Independence Day)
- 14 (Sun) Sacramento *Obon* Service
- 21 (Sun) L.A. *Obon* Service / Graduates Honored

August

- 2-4 (Fri-Sun) Sacramento Lake Tahoe *Benzaiten* Service (TBD)
- 18 (Sun) L.A. *Benzaiten* Service

September

- 1 (Sun) Fall Grand Festival and 75th Anniversary Celebration
- 3 (Tue) Church Closed (in lieu of Labor Day)
- 15 (Sun) L.A. *Higan* Service
- 22 (Sun) Sacramento *Higan* Service

October

- 15 (Tue) Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
- 20 (Sun) L.A. *Ujigami* Service
- 27 (Sun) Sacramento All Souls Service

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
www.gedatsu-usa.org



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Sachi Fukushima** of the Sacramento Spiritual Center. A third-generation Gedatsu member, Sachi is mother to **Nikki (Phil) Bridgham** and **Linzie (Chris) Graff** and grandmother of two, **Avery** and **Colin**. Sachi's grandparents,

Kanzaburo and **Hisaye Ide**, became Gedatsu pioneer members after Hisaye met and befriended **Mother Kiyota** at the Tule Lake internment camp during the war. Sachi followed her parents, **Kaneko** and **John Hatae**, in the church.

Sachi turns to Gedatsu for spiritual help and faith, which, she says, "helps me get through difficult times. With my many family members and friends in Gedatsu, the church feels like home."

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Outdoor Tea Ceremony and Kimono Experience



Above, Ms. Tokiko Okano, certified instructor of the revered Urasenke School of Tea, prepares *matcha* in the ancient *Chado* tradition on the seaside lawns of the Gedatsu Church. At left, Ms. Okano with Reverend Kazuo and Yoko Yamada in kimono.

The Gedatsu Church of Hawaii hosted an enchanting Japanese cultural event in November, inviting members and the public to experience *Chado*, the ancient Japanese art of tea ceremony, while savoring Japanese sweets and *matcha* tea prepared for the day. Many attendees wore kimonos that were provided for rental, donning them on the spot to join the tea gathering and/or to capture photo mementos.

Describing the day as an "elegant moment," **Rev. Kazuo Yamada** hoped that ongoing cultural exchange events at the church would "provide a platform for individuals from different backgrounds and cultures to connect on a deeper level, sharing in delightful moments together."

The event was an inspired collaboration between the Gedatsu Church and Sayumi Bridal, a prestigious wedding planning company based in Hawaii that specializes in traditional, Japanese and beach weddings.