



# GEDATSU COMPANION

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### Gedatsu Kongo's

### Thought for the Month

*"If a father is a god, then a mother is a buddha. We must demonstrate our humanity because we are descendants of gods."*

In the classic children's tale of "Pinocchio," a childless old toymaker, Geppetto, creates a wooden puppet named Pinocchio and wishes the toy to come alive. A kindly blue fairy grants his wish, transforming Pinocchio into a living being. However, only if Pinocchio is courageous, selfless, honest, and kind, will he become human – a real boy.

Although he is mischievous and causes Geppetto to worry, Pinocchio ultimately proves himself worthy of his creator's love through his selfless, truthful, obedient, and brave actions. He is rewarded with his transformation into a real boy.

This story teaches us the essence of our humanity: To do our best every day for the sake of others and society and to live a life of appreciation and gratitude.

## SEPTEMBER 2024

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

<b>Sun</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Fall Grand Festival</b>
Tue	3	Church Closed (in lieu of Labor Day)
Sun	8 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	10 7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	22 10:00 am	Appreciation Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

<b>Sun</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Fall Grand Festival</b> (in Sacramento)
Tue	3	Church Closed (in lieu of Labor Day)
Sun	8 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	15 10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Higan</i> Service Grandparents Recognition
Thu	19 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	22 10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice

## OCTOBER 2024

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	6 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	8 7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	13 10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	15	Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	27 10:00 am	Appreciation and All Souls Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

<b>Sat</b>	<b>5 11 am-4 pm</b>	<b>Craft and Bento Faire</b>
Sun	6 10:00	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	13 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	15	Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	20 10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Ujigami</i> Service / Luncheon Children's Halloween Costume Parade
Thu	24 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	27 10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice



*Let's  
Celebrate  
Together!*

## 150<sup>th</sup> Grand Festival and 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Sunday, September 1 – 9:30 a.m. Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento

Program I – Gochi Sanctuary Service  
Program II – Memorial Tower Enshrinement Ceremony  
Program III – Saito Goma Fire Ceremony

- **Welcome special guests from *Gedatsu-kai* Japan:**
  - **Bishop Teruo Okano**, chairman
  - **Yotsugi Takayuki Okano**, future Abbot
  - **Reverend and Mrs. Takao Kojima** (see photo and article in right column).
- **Dress appropriately.** Out of respect for the religious event and sacred site, Festival attendees are requested to wear “business casual” attire (e.g., no flip-flops, sweatpants, tank tops). Take care to dress appropriately for the hot Sacramento weather, too.
- **Experience Aztec Dance Troupe.** Performers trained in dance based on ancient Indigenous Mexican cultural traditions will perform after the Fire Ceremony and before lunch.
- **Enjoy free catered Mexican luncheon.** *Birria* grilled tacos, street tacos, and other tasty foods and beverages will be served.
- **Help with Festival expenses.** Due to the church’s current funding shortfall, members are asked to help pay for Anniversary and Festival expenses. Donations of \$10-\$15 per person are appreciated.



## September “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, September 8, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Robert Katsumi Fukushima, Glenn Shuji Hatae, Linda Carol Kashiwagi, Shigetaro Kino, Teruko Kino, Soichi Nakatani, Masako Sakamoto Tagawa, and Tetsuo Yomogida.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, September 8, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **David H. Dyson Jr., Kazuko Endo, Melanie Yosa Garion, Ann M. Ghazarians, Nancy Kikuchi, Misako Kobata, Liam Mikael Kowal, Hitoshi Matsumoto, Yasuko Matsumoto, Frank S. Miyamura, Nancy Mizuki, Hajimu Murakami, Charles Migiwa Nishi, Arlene Okimura, Tomoki Oyanagi, Jacobus Johannes Reckers, Ruth Muriel Reckers, Kiyoshi George Sakuma, Linda Sanchez, John Takeshi Sangen, Yuri T. Sangen, Setsu Shiroishi, Yoshio Fred Shoga, Himeko Tanji, Itsuya Frank Tanji, Moto Tanji, and Atsuko Watanabe.**

## *Irasshaimase*, Reverend and Mrs. Kojima!



We welcome a new minister from *Gedatsu-kai* Japan – **Reverend Takao Kojima** – who has been assigned to work alongside **Rev. Naoya Okano** at the L.A. Church. He and his wife, **Tomoko**, plan to immigrate to the U.S. this fall. Rev. Kojima lived in the L.A. area from 1975 to 1980 – three years next door to the old L.A. Church – while he pursued bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Cal State LA and UC Riverside, respectively.

“We are excited to study Gedatsu with U.S. members,” says Rev. Kojima. “We hope we can help and support members to deepen their Gedatsu study.”



### Happy 96<sup>th</sup> Birthday, Tom!

**Itsuto "Tom" Okimura**, the oldest member of the L.A. Gedatsu Church, was warmly celebrated by the congregation on his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. His surprise birthday party included a "This is Your Life" narration highlighting his life's events (produced and presented by **Allen Shiroishi**) and a digital presentation (produced by **Mariko Locheo**). He received a birthday cake (shown at left with his daughter, **Judy**), Dodgers baseball cap, and a gift certificate to his favorite eatery.

Tom was "so surprised," he said. "It was one of the best days of my life."

### L.A. Church Craft & Bento Faire

**Saturday, October 5 – 11 am to 4 pm**

The L.A. Church is sponsoring a Craft & Bento Faire, the first fund-raising event since the pandemic. Members are urged to support the event by inviting family and friends, pre-ordering bento boxes, welcoming crafters to participate, purchasing craft and sale items, and serving as volunteers.

The Faire will feature dozens of Art & Craft vendors selling their own original, handcrafted items. Enjoy browsing and shopping dozens of craft items – everything from sewing creations, handmade gift boxes, canvas bags, and crafts sets to Hawaiian jewelry, ceramic arts and cups, *origami* specialties, and lots more! Also shop for big bargain sale items, home baked macaroons, and Pokemon cards. **All crafters are welcome to reserve a table(s). Scan the QR code below or contact the church to reserve a space.**

The Faire also will sell delicious Japanese bento – featuring BBQ teriyaki chicken, *nishime* (Japanese veggies), *tsukemono* (pickled cabbage), fruit, and rice – for \$15. A bento without *nishime* and fruit is available for \$10. **All bentos must be pre-ordered and pre-paid. Scan the QR code below or contact the church to place your order(s).**



For more information, contact **Mariko Locheo**, office manager, at (626) 288-1212 or [locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com](mailto:locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com).



Poster design by Mariko Locheo

The Craft & Bento Faire is planned and organized by the L.A. Regional Board and Women's Club, under the leadership of **Judy Hamamoto**, event chairperson.



### “Thank you, Reverend Taki. We will miss you!”



**Reverend Hisakazu Taki** of *Gedatsu-kai Japan* visited the L.A. Church in July. *After 45 years of dedicated service to Gedatsu Church USA, he is retiring from active visits to the U.S. Here is his final sermon to American members.*

### “Every Day is a Good Day!”

Good morning, everyone! I am happy to see you again. How have you been?

I was born in 1948 and will turn 76 next month. I am really grateful to be able to work for the church in good health at this age. Forty-six years ago, when I was 30 years old, I came to L.A. and met you for the first time. Ten years later, at age 40, I became a church minister. It's been 36 years since then. I can't express my appreciation enough for your long-time friendship and support.

#### Remembering friends, good times

During this period of time, many of my Gedatsu friends here have passed away. They include: **Kishida Sensei, Mother Kiyota, Reverend Jerry, Pat, Terry Shiroishi and their wives, Ishida Sensei and his wife, Yozo and Sumiko Tsujimura, Mrs. Mizokami, Mrs. Wakasa, Bill and Gerry Waldman, Mr. and Mrs. Castillo, Mr. and Mrs. Ogura, Mr. and Mrs. Nagao, Mr. Tanji, Mr. and Mrs. Kawamura, Mr. and Mrs. Taniguchi, Louis Ito, Mr. Kitagawa, Mr. and Mrs. Miyasako, Horace and Teruko Nakamura, Mr. Fukunaga, Mr. Mori, Mariko Michiuye, Mr. Okada, Mr. and Mrs. Onishi, Mr. and Mrs. Oyanagi, Mr. Shoga, Joe Takara, Ben and Nora Toguchi, Robert and Dorothy Tomita, Roger and Helen Nishida, Clifton Mizokami, Linda Sanchez, Arlene Okimura, Rudy Tsujimura, Frank Miyamura, Ben Hamamoto, Lori Tsujimura, and many others.**

The recollection of these friends and the memories of the good times we shared are still vividly awake in me. I realize more than ever how much I owe them, and my heart is overwhelmed with gratitude.

What do you think Gedatsu is? Is it something difficult to understand? Is it something to master by going through hard training? No, I don't think so. Gedatsu is a path of happiness for everyone to learn and practice through our daily living. Gedatsu is a simple path, which is, in a word, to live each day with appreciation and gratitude.

#### Treasure and appreciate each day

I believe you know the Japanese art of tea ceremony, which was established by Master Sen-no-Rikyu in 16<sup>th</sup> century. He summarized the spirit of the tea ceremony as follows:

*Ichigo-ichi-e*: Treasure every meeting, for it will never recur.

*Nichi-nichi-kore-kojitsu*: Every day is a good day.

These two phrases explain the essence of the tea ceremony. You may think every day is almost the same. But we can never experience today again.

Today, we have this Appreciation Service here. You may think that the same people attend this service each time. However, we will never have the same experience of today's service again.

Tea Master Sen-no-rikyu lived in the age of civil wars. Each time he held a tea ceremony, feeling that they might not be able to meet again, he tried to make a cup of tea for the guest in the sincerest and kindest manner. And the guests also really appreciated the moment they shared having a cup of tea with respect.

Even though much time has passed, this truth never changes. Who knows if we can meet again. Please be aware of this and live each day with appreciation. This is the spirit of the Japanese tea ceremony.

This is the essence of Gedatsu teaching, too. We may encounter unexpected difficulties in life even when we live with honesty. You may become overwhelmed with grief sometimes. This is life. But, in such a case, please remember that you are still alive now, and that you have family members, friends, neighbors, or someone who cares about you.

*(Continued on back page)*

### A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

#### Chapter 9 – Part 2

##### War

##### An honored tradition

In April of 1942, the second Pilgrimage to the Three Sacred Sites was performed. Whereas the first pilgrimage was performed with President Okano and six leaders, the second pilgrimage was performed by a group of 600 members. Because it was impossible for a group of that size to find lodging in the temple, the chief priest, upon the request of President Okano, allowed the group the unprecedented permission to sleep overnight on straw mats on the ground.

President Okano could not join the pilgrimage but waited for their return in formal dress. He told them, “You are making this pilgrimage on behalf of the Japanese people and all mankind. You should be thankful for the honor of this great mission.”

##### The Founder’s teaching preserved

At the Spring Festival in May of 1942, President Okano published *Shinko*, or “Sincere Practice.” Although it consists of only 32 pages, it remains the most important book on the Gedatsu teaching.

“This is a small book,” President Okano said, “but I wrote everything in it. After I die, please read this book again and again until you understand it.”

##### Excerpt from *Shinko* (“Sincere Practice”):

*“Man is a spiritual offshoot of God. We are allowed to live by God. Just as our physical being exists in accordance with the universal phenomena, our hearts and minds must also exist in harmony with God.”*

*“It is quite natural that we are constantly together with God, and that we are allowed to exist by God. Live or die, we are at the mercy of God. Even after death, we exist in company with God. Furthermore, we can attain godhood.”*

After the publication of *Shinko*, President Okano made an overnight trip to the Ito hot springs together with all teachers in celebration of its publication, demonstrating how pleased he was with its publication. This was his first and last trip with all teachers.

From 1941 through 1942, President Okano released 1,100,000 young carp and trout fish into the Suwa Lake to aid in increasing food production. The young fish, called “Gedatsu trout” by local people, increased with each succeeding year. At dawn, they could be seen swimming in a group darkening the surface of the water.

Through public efforts of this kind, President Okano encouraged members to follow his example by working selflessly in their hometowns to combat severe wartime shortages.

#### Chapter 10

##### Under the Air Raid Threat

On February 25, 1943, President Okano visited Kitamotojuku as usual and delivered his sermon for members and local residents around *Goreichi*. He then gave them some personal guidance. When he finished speaking, the crowd sensed something unusual about him. At that moment, President Okano collapsed and briefly lost consciousness. When he recovered, he stated that while he was unconscious, he had a vision of Tokyo and other major cities in flames.

After he returned home, President Okano called an attendant and told her, “I have something to tell you. From now on, be ready to flee at a moment’s notice. Japan is now in a state of emergency. Tokyo and other parts of Japan will be in flames before long.”

He explained how to escape in the event of an emergency. He predicted that all parts of Japan very soon would be in flames because of the U.S. air raids.

(Continued on Page 6)

*(Biography – Continued from page 5)*

### Counseling members on wartime activities

President Okano continued to give members guidance in their industrial activities to aid Japanese suffering from wartime shortages.

Shinichi Asai of Nagoya and Shigeru Kubota of Nagano were the central figures in these activities. Asai produced socks, shirts, underwear and other consumer goods in his factory. Kubota produced other articles of clothing and sent them to President Okano. He produced yarn from waste cocoons, too.

Michiko Sobora, who had been instrumental in instructing members in silk-lace knitting, had gone there to teach a class. Miyoko Inagaki produced lap (batts of undyed silk) and floss silk. She also organized a workshop for silk-lace knitting for war widows. The war widows then became able to produce goods of silk-lace knitting later in the year.

President Okano wrote letters to members throughout Japan, instructing them in various industrial activities. He always encouraged them to put forth maximum efforts for their country, not for their own benefit. Following his guidance, members started a number of industrial activities in various parts of the country.

From July of 1943, President Okano turned to Hima-silkworms as a means to increase production of clothing.

Hima-silkworm is a kind of silkworm, which grows by eating the leaves of Hima, or castor-oil plants. The research for Hima-silkworm raising was started in Japan and became industrialized in Manchuria and Taiwan. President Okano believed that the Hima-silkworm was a wonderful gift from God for the increased production of clothing. He encouraged members to raise Hima-silkworms, and production increased rapidly as members responded to his urging.

### Putting Gedatsu into practice for others' welfare

Sahichi Okubo, Kamekichi Abe, Shichinosuke Asano and Mitsuo Yuge were assigned as instructors in Hima-silkworm production. They received a letter from President Okano, requesting them to come to the church headquarters because he had something "special" to say to them.

When they arrived, President Okano told them, "Go out for your study."

They understood by these words that they were assigned as instructors. The three older men humbly accepted the appointment. But Yuge, the youngest among them, was troubled. He declined, saying, "I am ill-prepared to teach members."

President Okano then told him sternly, "Who told you to teach them? Relate only what you've done until today. You can do that, can't you?"

Yuge was then sincerely determined to accept the appointment.

Okubo was also shocked by President Okano's words and felt unsettled.

President Okano told him, "Man is allowed to be born into this world by Nature. Living things will surely be fed. If you truly feel thankful for the blessing from Nature, why don't you devote your whole life to the salvation of people with the sun-spirit? You now have of an important duty as instructor. Don't be mistaken. If you don't like it, you may quit. I'm not asking you for my sake. What a shame that you should be influenced by a petty contracted idea!" Okubo was then fully determined to devote himself to Gedatsu at that time.

In January of 1944, the Japanese government, believing that U.S. Army air raids were inevitable, ordered the evacuation of citizens from buildings in Tokyo and Nagoya to rural areas.

People were confronted with a very difficult situation they had never experienced. President Okano encouraged each member to live positively with an unshakable faith, no matter what difficult situation they might be confronted with.

*(Next month: "Under the Air Raid Threat" – Part 2)*



## **Northern California** Total: \$2,944

General Donations: J. Tanaka, A. Akashi / P. Tomita, M/M D. Ide, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, K. Tateishi, M. Fukushima, M. Lumpkin, No Name, R. Nakatani, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa, T. Bartos, A. Sebe

### Special Acknowledgments

J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Service for Yukie Ota, Keisuke Tateishi, Yukio Tateishi, Susie Setsuko Tateishi
M/M D. Ide	"Never Forgotten" Service for Uncle Yukio Jim Ide, Auntie Kazue Kotabe, Tsuma Kino
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation and gratitude – Appreciation Service and 2024 grads honored
K. Ota Schubert	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Service
S. Yabut	"Never Forgotten" Service in memory of Yukie Ota
M/M C. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Service appreciation
Anonymous	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Service, Obon Service, honor graduates, monthly donation (\$500)

## **Southern California** Total: \$7,920

General: M/M K. Chinen, A. DeWitt, M/M M. Hamada, J. Hamamoto, M/M T. Hiram, T. Ishida, J. Ito, J. Kaku, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M D. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, Anonymous, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, P. Muronaka, P. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M P. Reid (\$3,000), M/M S. Shalkan, D. Shiroishi, J. Shiroishi, N. Takara, H. Taki, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood, No Name

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M/M P. Reid	"Never Forgotten" Service for Eddie Kinya Ogura and Nancy Yoshie Ogura
A. Tsujimura	In memory of Otomatsu Shiba, Rudy Tsujimura, and Yoko Tsujimura
T. Ishida	"Never Forgotten" Service for Michiye and Nobuyoshi Shimohira
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	In memory of Rudy Tsujimura and Yoko Tsujimura
J. Ito	In memory of Louis K. Ito
M/M T. Matsumoto	"Never Forgotten" Service for Kyoko Nakaguchi and Tomoko Imai
J. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Shiroishi ancestor blessing
M/M A. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Shiroishi ancestor blessing
D. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
M/M F. Barthel	With sincere appreciation and gratitude (\$600)
K. Giroux Shiroishi	Appreciation for ancestor blessing

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General: G. Iwata, S. Thorne, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

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

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*("Every Day" – Continued from page 4)*

At this age, I truly feel that life is short. I now realize how valuable life is. Even if you have difficulties now, don't forget that you are still alive. Your heart is beating inside you now. This present moment will never come back. You never know if you can meet the person in front of you again. We share this precious moment together now. Please remember this.

Treasure every meeting, for it will never recur. That's why every day is a good day, a very precious day.

Gedatsu is to live each day with gratitude. This is a path for everyone to live a happy life. Let us follow this simple path of happiness each day and be happy together!

This is my last talk before you. Thank you very much for your long-time friendship and kindness. Best wishes to all of you!



In his farewell message to the congregation, Rev. Taki expressed his appreciation to everyone for their support and friendship over the years. In turn, the congregation expressed their gratitude for his long-time dedication and sincerity in guiding Gedatsu Church USA. He was gifted with thank-you cards, a handmade lei and a Dodgers Shohei Ohtani #17 jersey.