

GEDATSU COMPANION



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Gedatsu Kongo’s Thought for the Month

*“Human beings have been given
the special mission of faithfully
fulfilling God’s will.”*

As human beings, we have been given exceptional qualities and abilities by God, which set us apart from other living creatures. These gifts were given to us with a clear purpose.

Why? Because God trusts us, has great expectations for us, and has chosen human beings to help fulfill the divine purpose God seeks to achieve.

Knowing that we are charged with this special God-given mission, we should endeavor to live each day in accordance with God’s will.

JANUARY 2026

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Thu	1	9:00 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	4	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Sun	11		No Service
Tue	20		Church Close (in lieu of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day)
Tue	20	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	25	10:00 am	New Year Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Thu	1	7:30 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	4	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	11	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Thu	15	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	18	10:00 am	New Year Appreciation Service
Tue	20		Church Close (in lieu of Martin Luther King, Jr., Day)

FEBRUARY 2026

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Sun	8		No Service
Tue	10	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Tue	17		Church Close (in lieu of Presidents’ Day)
Sun	22	10:00 am	Sun Spirit and Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	8	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Sun	15	10:00 am	Appreciation and Sun Spirit Service
Tue	17		Church Close (in lieu of Presidents’ Day)
Thu	19	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	22	10:00 am	Cultural Event TBD

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	28	12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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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.

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 on **Sunday, January 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Richard Aadland, Natsuko Furukawa, Jane Kaoru Ide, Richard Nobuo Kozuki, 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 11, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **David H. Dyson III, Richard Higashi, Sanshiro Hirami, Aileen T. Hirayama, Terry Teruko L. Imuta, Elaine Rose Kaproff, Takako Karplus, Walter Karplus, Yoshihiko Kitagawa, Tadashi Thomas Matsumoto, Kazuko Matsuura, Kiyoko Michiuye, Konami Miyakawa, Frank Miyamura, Asaye Mizuki, Fumi Murakami, Katsuyo Nagao, Hisano Nakamura, Mark Yukimasa Nakamura, Misuko Nakamura, Mohei Nakamura, Reiko Nakamura, Hiroko Notoya, Chika Okimura, Motoichi Okimura, Eiko Onishi, Chiyoko Sato, Grace Yuko Sato, Florence Sueyoshi, Moto Tanji, Saburo Tanji, Dennis Koichi Toguchi, Nobuko Tsujimura, Sumiko Tsujimura, Kenneth Kenichiro Yasuda, Noriko Yoshihara, and Frank Young.**

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.

Have You Renewed Your 2026 Church Membership?

Annual membership dues increase to keep pace with the cost of living – the first increase in ten years.

<u>Annual Membership:</u> Renewable annually	
Individual	\$60 (including each child age 30+ living at home)
Family	\$100
<u>Lifetime Membership:</u> Pay your membership dues just once, instead of paying annually	
Individual	\$600
Family	\$1,000

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 minimum 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.

Celebrating, Giving Thanks for Our Children

In November, congregations of the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church and Sacramento Spiritual Center observed the traditional Japanese festival of *Shichi Go San* (7-5-3) that joyfully celebrates the well-being and healthy futures of children ages seven, five and three.



In L.A., in a prayer ceremony conducted by Reverend Naoya Okano before the *Ujigami* shrine, families gave thanks for the divine protection and guidance their children receive. The honored children were given *chitose-ame* candy – *chitose* literally meaning a thousand years – a gift card from the Sunday School.

Pictured with Rev. Naoya, are (from left to right): Emmet Okita, 5, (parents Mai and Garrett Okita); Benjamin Yamada, 3, (parents Jeffrey and Faye Yamada); Liliana Hamamoto, 3, (parents Bryce and Ada Hamamoto); and Nanami Okano, 7, (parents Naoya and Yuko Okano).



In Sacramento, the congregation celebrated the 7-5-3 Festival by honoring Kaikoa Guimond, age 3, who received a gift card and sweet treats from the church.

Kaikoa is pictured at left with his parents, Andrew Guimond and Michelle Horner, and sister Dahlia. They are flanked by his grandparents, Nancy and John Horner.



L.A. member Arlene Tsujimura celebrated her 88th birthday on November 20 in grand style, thanks to loving family members.



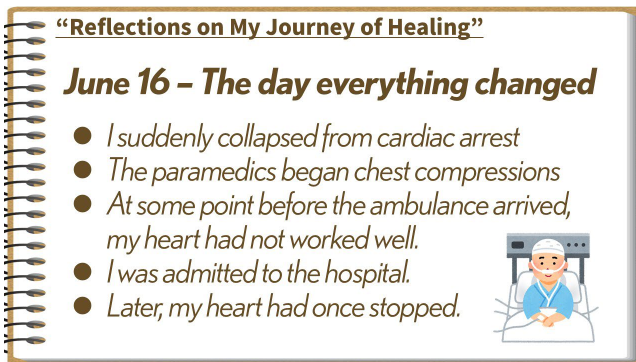
“Reflections on My Journey of Healing”
Sermon by **Reverend Naoya Okano**
Sunday, November 26, 2025 – L.A. Church

Thanks to many blessings, I celebrated my 40th birthday on November 1. As I reflect on turning forty, I feel deeply grateful simply to be alive and standing here today.

The day everything changed

On June 16, while taking my kids – **Ryunosuke**, 9, and **Nanami**, 7 – to their first day of summer school, I suddenly collapsed at the school. I later learned this was due to a heart condition called arrhythmia.

According to those who were there, it took about ten minutes for the ambulance to arrive. The paramedics began chest compressions as soon as they got to the scene. It seems that at some point before the ambulance arrived, my heart had not worked well.



PowerPoint slides created by Reverend Okano

From there, I was admitted to the hospital. Although my heart returned to normal, I remained unconscious. Later, my heart had once stopped. That was a tough and dangerous situation, but thanks to the dedicated care and tireless efforts of so many doctors and nurses, I regained consciousness four days later.

My journey of healing

Thanks to everyone’s support, I’m truly on the road to recovery now, and I can feel myself getting stronger day by day. However, the journey to this point has been full of ups and downs.

When a heart has a problem, the first organs to suffer damage are the brain and the kidneys. Since severe brain damage makes recovery very difficult, I was treated with therapeutic hypothermia while unconscious to minimize damage to my brain.

Because of that, I was able to recover without any lasting brain damage, but my kidneys suffered significant damage instead.

After I regained consciousness, I was diagnosed with acute kidney injury and had to start dialysis. Right after dialysis began, I was extremely fatigued and couldn’t help but feel discouraged, thinking, “Will I have to live with this for the rest of my life?” Still, when my doctor told me that “there’s a 50–50 chance of recovery from acute kidney injury caused by a heart problem,” I chose to focus on the positive side: “There’s a 50% chance of recovery!” I continued going to dialysis three times a week.

Blessings from the Gedatsu community

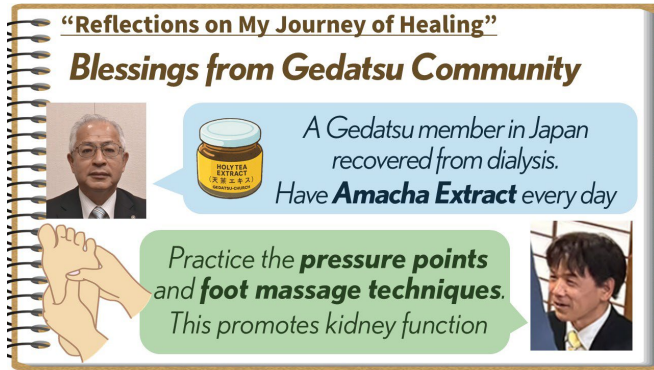
In addition to the expert medical care I was given, I received additional blessings from the Gedatsu community.

My father gave me Amacha extract, telling me, “This preparation enabled a Gedatsu member in Japan to recover from dialysis. You should consume this every day.” So, I continued to take the Amacha extract on a daily basis.

(Continued on page 5)

("Reflections" – continued from page 4)

"Reflections on My Journey of Healing"
Blessings from Gedatsu Community



A Gedatsu member in Japan recovered from dialysis. Have **Amacha Extract** every day.

Practice the **pressure points** and **foot massage techniques**. This promotes kidney function.

In addition, my co-worker in the Gedatsu health department in Japan sent me a video about pressure points and foot massage techniques that promote kidney function, which I practiced daily. Thanks to that, my urine — which I was unable to pass at first — gradually started to flow again. Little by little, my kidneys began to recover.

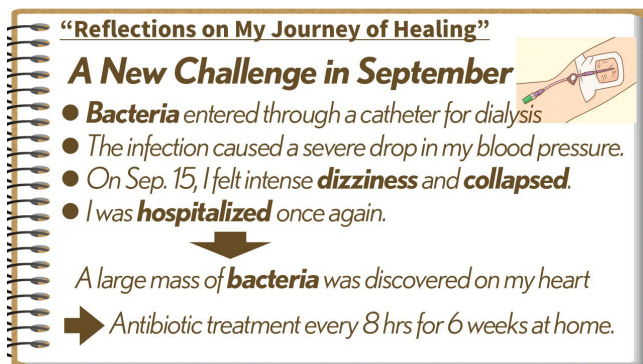
A new challenge

In September, when I was truly feeling grateful for everything, I was struck by a new challenge.

Some of you may remember that on August 31, when **Yotsugi Takayuki Okano** visited Los Angeles, I appeared to be doing well. However, not long after that, I was absent again. Some of you wondered what had happened.

At that time, I had a catheter inserted in my chest for dialysis, but it seems that bacteria entered through that area, leading to an infection, which caused a severe drop in my blood pressure. On September 15, after returning home from dialysis, I felt intense dizziness and collapsed. I was hospitalized once again.

"Reflections on My Journey of Healing"
A New Challenge in September



- **Bacteria** entered through a catheter for dialysis
- The infection caused a severe drop in my blood pressure.
- On Sep. 15, I felt intense **dizziness** and **collapsed**.
- I was **hospitalized** once again.

A large mass of **bacteria** was discovered on my heart

➔ Antibiotic treatment every 8 hrs for 6 weeks at home.

Once treatment with antibiotics began, my condition gradually improved, but it was then discovered that a large mass of bacteria, called vegetation, had formed on my heart. As a result, I had to continue antibiotic treatment every eight hours for six weeks at home.

The doctors implied that if any bacteria remained after those six weeks, open-heart surgery would be necessary. My wife **Yuko** and I prayed earnestly every day while continuing the treatment.

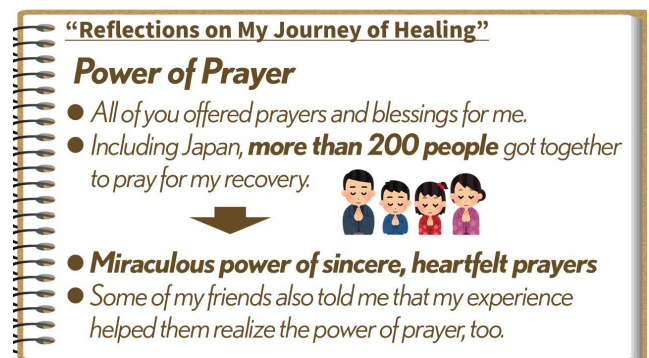
By the end of October, after completing the six-week treatment, I saw my doctor and was grateful to learn that the infection had cleared. It was a tremendous relief and a moment of deep appreciation. Moreover, during that time, my kidney function showed significant improvement, so the doctors decided to suspend dialysis and monitor my condition.

This is the brief explanation of what happened to me. Through this experience, I learned many things. I would like to share three of them with you.

Lessons learned – the power of prayer

The first is the power of prayer. When I first collapsed, all of you gathered to offer prayers and blessings for me. Also, not only the members in the U.S., but also many Gedatsu friends in Japan offered prayers for my recovery. From what I was told, more than 200 people participated.

"Reflections on My Journey of Healing"
Power of Prayer



- All of you offered prayers and blessings for me.
- Including Japan, **more than 200 people** got together to pray for my recovery.

➔

- **Miraculous power of sincere, heartfelt prayers**
- Some of my friends also told me that my experience helped them realize the power of prayer, too.

I believe I'm not the only one who, at times, has wondered while praying before the altar, "Does this really have meaning? Are my prayers truly being heard?" Through this experience, I was able to feel the miraculous power of sincere, heartfelt prayers, especially prayers and blessings delivered by many people together. Some of my friends also told me that my experience helped them realize the power of prayer, too.

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("Reflections" – continued from page 5)

Help from my guardian spirit

The second lesson is the presence of a guardian spirit. While I was unconscious, there is one memory that remains vividly in my mind. I remember struggling in darkness, and behind me—slightly to my right—I saw the image of a baby wrapped in a swaddling cloth, softly floating. In my *Goshugyo* – one of the three sacred practices of Gedatsu church, which involves direct communication with departed souls through the sacred *Goho* – there often appears a baby girl named Kikue, who was the daughter of Gedatsu Kongo and who died in the Great Kanto Earthquake. When Yamada-sensei was in Los Angeles, he once told me, "Kikue will surely become Naoya's guardian angel."

Since then, I continued to offer prayers for her. During my time of unconsciousness, I strongly felt that the baby I saw was Kikue, and I am convinced that she was the one who guided and protected me through that darkness.

True, heartfelt gratitude

The third point may sound ordinary, but I've come to appreciate the simple things in life more than ever before. Recently, my father said to me, "When you were healthy, full of energy, and working vigorously, I don't think you ever imagined you'd be thinking the way you do now. I pray that through this experience, you will become an even better person than you already are." I truly feel the same.

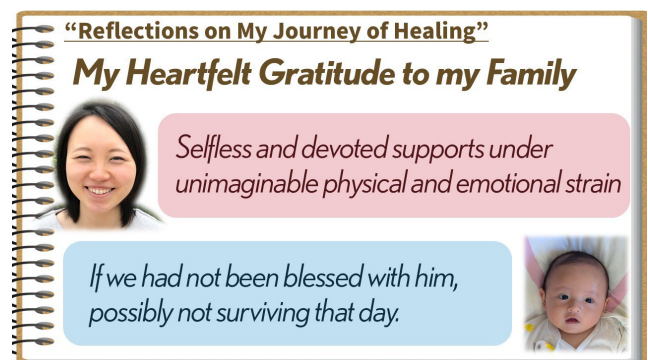
For example, when I was discharged from the hospital in June, I had an ICD—an implantable defibrillator—near my left collarbone, and a dialysis line near my right collarbone. Whenever I took a shower, I had to carefully cover them with plastic wrap so they wouldn't get wet. And when I was discharged again in September, I had a PICC line in my right arm, which required the same level of care and caution during showers.

Thankfully, at the end of October all of the tubes and lines were finally removed from my body. The moment I could take a shower freely without worrying about anything, I felt a deep, heartfelt sense of gratitude.

Lastly, I am standing here today only because of the countless blessings and support from so many people. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who offered sincere prayers and blessings for me, and to all who supported my recovery. I am especially thankful to **Reverend and Mrs. Kojima** for taking care of the church during my absence.

I am also deeply grateful for those of you who offered food deliveries. This food delivery really helped Yuko in this difficult time. I truly appreciate your kindness.

I would also like to thank those who looked after our new-born son **Kotaro** so that Yuko could visit me in the hospital, and those who took Ryunosuke and Nanami out to play so they wouldn't feel lonely.



There are far too many acts of kindness to mention, but I was truly sustained by an immeasurable amount of love and support. I am deeply thankful to my family as well—especially Yuko. Just five days after giving birth to our third child, Kotaro, I collapsed. Still in recovery from delivery, caring for a newborn, and under unimaginable physical and emotional strain, she selflessly and devotedly supported me through it all.

I also feel that Kotaro himself helped save my life. If we had not been blessed with him, my wife and children would have been in Japan when I collapsed. It happened on a Monday—the church was closed—and I would have been home alone in the U.S., possibly not surviving that day. But because of Kotaro, my family was here with me. The children attended summer school, and since I collapsed at the school, someone was able to immediately call an ambulance.

Truly, a series of coincidences—and miracles—allowed me to live today.

(Continued on back page)

NOVEMBER 2025 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,144

General Donations: J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, M. Fukushima, No Name, P. Harada, R. Ide, S. McSwain

Special Acknowledgments

A. Sebe	Fall Festival appreciation
M/M D. Ide	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service appreciation in memory of Kaoru Ide Kotabe and Maio Kino
J. Tanaka	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service in memory of George Akiyoshi
M/M D. Tsuboi	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service with gratitude
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Service
J. Tanaka	Gedatsu Kongo Birthday appreciation and gratitude
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation and gratitude for 4 th Sunday Service, Gedatsu Kongo Birthday and 7-5-3 Celebration
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, monthly donation
M/M J. Horner	Monthly appreciation and “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service appreciation (\$600)

Thank you to these donors who responded to the appeal for donations to replace/repair the backflow prevention valve that was stolen from the L.A. Church: Y. Oishi, R. Pang, T. Kojima, M/M N. Scott (Nichigetsukan Dojo) M/M M. Ishida (Aijo Dojo), M/M V. Mizokami (\$1,000), R. Rivera and N. Gonzalez (\$2,500), M/M R. Allum, M/M P. Reid

Correction to

October listing

M/M M. Sunahara donation for Memorial Tower induction for Fujiko Taketa appreciation

Southern California Total: \$3,220

General: A. DeWitt, J. Hamamoto, Jn. Hamamoto, T. Ishida, J. Ito (\$500), J. Kaku, S. Kaku, M/M T. Kojima, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Murakami, P. Tomita, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M A. Shiroishi, A. Tsujimura (\$500), M/M H. Tsujimura, E. Okita, R. Pang, F. Yamada.

Special Acknowledgments

T. Ishida	Appreciation for trip to Japan and return to U.S.
T. Ishida	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service for Hitoshi and Fumio Ishida
Kaku/Mahoney Families	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service for George Imuta
M/M K. Kuritani	Appreciation for Master Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Memorial Service
Do. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Master Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Memorial Service
M/M H. Tsujimura	Appreciation for Master Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Memorial Service

Online Donations: Total: \$773

General: G. Iwata, D. Allum, J. Reid, S. Shiroishi, W. Young, H. Tsujimura, T. Palelek, G. Hass, C. Sunahara

Note: Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+.

Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+.



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"Reflections on My Journey of Healing"

Gedatsu emphasizes absolute gratitude

"Each day, simply being alive is something to be grateful for."

- *Life is full of ups and downs for everyone.*
- *The path to true happiness will always open for those who accept everything with gratitude..*

The Gedatsu teaching emphasizes absolute gratitude: "Each day, simply being alive is something to be grateful for." I truly feel that with all my heart.

I've heard that many people who collapse from arrhythmia or other heart problems, even after they recover, struggle with depression or become afraid to go out because they fear their heart might stop again. However, I personally do not feel any such fear at all.

We are alive because God allows us to be. I am grateful to be alive today, and I want to live each day to the fullest. As long as the role God has given me continues, I intend to keep doing my very best without ceasing.

Life is full of ups and downs for everyone. No matter what happens, please accept it with gratitude, learn from it, and grow through it. I truly believe that by doing so, the path to true happiness will always open before you.

It's been a while since I last gave a talk, so I may have gotten a little carried away—but thank you for your patience in allowing me to share my story.



The Okano family, from left: Ryunosuke, Yuko with Kotaro, Nanami, and Reverend Naoya.