

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Board of Directors

Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"There is greater joy in giving
thanks than in receiving."*

When we receive a gift or a favor and experience the kindness of others, it is natural to feel grateful. However, if we stop there, our state of mind can become dependent on what others do for us.

Instead, we should put ourselves in the shoes of those around us, imagine what would bring them joy, and put those thoughts into action.

When we do this, even if we receive nothing in return, joy arises simply from doing something for others.

Consider, for example, a mother's devotion—wishing for her child's happiness and pouring out her love without putting herself first. Is there anything more precious than this embodiment of selfless, unconditional love, acting not for one's own sake, but for the happiness of another?

OCTOBER 2026

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	11		No Service
Tue	13		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
		7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	25	10:00 am	Appreciation and All Souls Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sat	3	11am – 4 pm	Bento and Holiday Craft Fair
Sun	4	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	11	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	13		Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)
Sun	18	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Ujigami</i> Service / Luncheon
			Children's Halloween Costume Parade
Thu	23	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	25	10:00 am	Cultural Event TBD

CHURCHWIDE

Fri	30	5:00 pm	Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom
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NOVEMBER 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
Sun	22	10:00 am	Appreciation / Gedatsu Kongo Birthday
			7-5-3 Children's Celebration
Thu-Fri	26-27		Church Closed (Thanksgiving Holiday)

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 Service /
			7-5-3 Children's Celebration & Luncheon
Thu-Fri	26-27		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.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, October 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Clarence Aiona, Shane Holland, Motoji Ide, Shinji Kobayashi, Leon Letoto, Ted Matsumoto, Kazuko Nakayama, Yasuichi Sebe, Sadako Taketa, Yoshi Tanaka, Nancy Yabu, and Tommy Yabu.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, October 11, 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.**



7-5-3 Children’s Celebration

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 15
Sacramento – Sunday, November 22

Honored 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.

Renew Your Church Membership for 2027

Annual Membership: Renewable annually

Individual	\$60 (including each child age 30+ living at home)
Family	\$100

Lifetime Membership: 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.

Update Your Contact Information

Please notify the L.A. Church of any changes to your home address, email address, phone/cellphone numbers so that we can send you the latest church communications and announcements. Member contact information is not published.

Email **Rev. Naoya Okano** at 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.

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 2027, complete the order form inserted in this newsletter and mail it by November 1 to your local church with your check for payment.



Saturday, October 3
11:00 am – 4:00 pm
L.A. Gedatsu Church

Come out and support the L.A. Church fundraiser! Our Fair will feature dozens of local artisans and crafters selling original, handcrafted items. Invite family and friends, enjoy our delicious bento boxes, purchase craft and sale items, and serve as volunteers.

154th Grand Fall Festival – Gedatsu Spiritual Center



154th Grand Fall Festival of Gedatsu Church USA was successfully and joyfully held on Sunday, September 6, on the sacred *Goreichi* grounds of the Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento, California.

The Festival officially began the previous day, on Saturday, with the solemn Shinto ceremony of the formal Reporting Service, or *Houkoku-sai* (pictured above) before the *Tenjinchigi* Universal Life Force shrine. The ceremony was officiated by Reverend Naoya Okano and Reverend Takao Kojima. Future Abbot, *Yotsugi* Takayuki Okano (far right), delivered the invocation, expressing appreciation to the Universal Life Force, Gedatsu Kongo and all guardian spirits. He humbly requested permission to conduct the Grand Festival and prayed for continued divine guidance and blessings for Gedatsu members and all inhabitants of the United States.

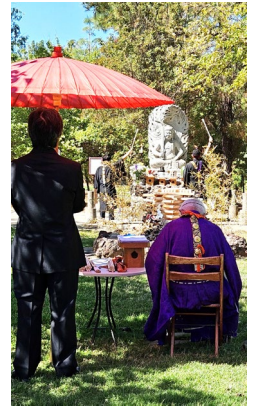


On Sunday morning, under sparkling blue skies, a deep spirit of gratitude pervaded the *Goreichi* grounds as members and friends gathered for the 154th Fall Grand Festival, coming together to express their deep and sincere appreciation to the Universal Life Force and all spirits for the infinite blessings they receive each day.

Pictured above, from the left: Ryunosuke Okano led the procession of ministers in the outdoor ceremony before the *Tenjinchigi* Universal Life Force shrine. Sacramento member, Everett McSwain, welcomed the congregation and emceed Program I of the Festival. The opening and closing prayers were led by Reverend Naoya Okano, and Reverend Takao Kojima led the prayer for All Souls, as L.A. member Ikuko Kuritani offered *Amacha* holy tea blessing. Future Abbot *Yotsugi* Takayuki Okano delivered his inspirational sermon in both English and Japanese. (Read his sermon on page 5.) Remarks on behalf of the Board of Directors were made by Joyce Reid. (See back page.)



In conjunction with the Fall Festival, five new souls were enshrined in the Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower. With offerings of flowers, incense and holy tea, family members and friends of the deceased souls participated in the enshrinement ceremony and gathered for a commemorative group photo.



The sacred *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony was conducted before the *Fudo-myo* guardian spirit, beginning with a procession of ministers led by Senior Reverend Akira Sebe. *Yotsugi* Takayuki Okano read the invocation, formally requesting permission to perform the sacred rite. Seated before *Fudo*, Reverend Sebe invoked the deity's fierce and protective spirit, praying for the salvation of unrested souls, happiness in all aspects of our lives, and peace throughout the world. Following the rhythmic chanting and prayers of the ministers and congregation, accompanied by the blowing of the conch shell, members of the congregation threw wooden prayer plaques bearing their personal wishes and prayers into the consecrated fire.

Upon the conclusion of the Fall Grand Festival activities, the ministers posed for a photo in the Social Hall. Pictured from left: Reverend Takao Kojima, Senior Reverend Akira Sebe, *Yotsugi* Takayuki Okano, and Reverend Naoya Okano.



**Sermon by
Future Abbot
Yotsugi Takayuki Okano**

**Fall Grand Festival
September 6, 2026
Gedatsu Spiritual Center
Sacramento, California**

My sincere congratulations to all of you on the celebration of this Grand Fall Festival.

I am Takayuki Okano, visiting from Gedatsu-kai of Japan. I am deeply grateful and delighted to be able to participate in the Grand Fall Festival here in Sacramento for the first time in two years.

Ninety-eight years ago, Master Gedatsu Kongo founded the Gedatsu Church in Japan. Today, *Gedatsu-kai* of Japan is moving toward its 100th anniversary, which we will celebrate in 2028 – just two years from now.

Here in the United States, Mother Kiyota was the pioneering leader who laid the foundation for the Gedatsu Church USA. With direct guidance from Gedatsu Kongo, she spread the Gedatsu teachings among Japanese Americans in the California internment camps during World War II. In 1950, at her request, Archbishop Eizan Kishida, who was then the leader of Gedatsu-kai of Japan, came to America and officially established Gedatsu Church USA.

Subsequently, these sacred grounds here in Sacramento were established. And now, united by the Gedatsu teachings, we are gathered here to celebrate this wonderful day.

Carry Forward the Founding Spirit of Gedatsu

In Japan, we have adopted a slogan for the upcoming centennial: “Thank You for 100 Years. Let Us Carry It Forward to 200 Years.”

This raises an important question for all of us: How shall we carry our gratitude for the past 100 years into the future? What will be our legacy for the next 100 years?

Gedatsu Kongo left us not only the teachings of Gedatsu, but also the Grand Festivals held each spring and autumn as the most sacred occasions of our lives.

Among his teachings, we find these words: “Religion is to pray. Through prayer, we guide humanity. How beautiful it is to pray. The highest form of reverence is expressed through prayer. Religion is, above all, prayer. We purify our hearts and pray to God, to Buddha, to all people, and to all things. We pray with gratitude. We pray with reverence for all that is sacred.”

Prayer: Essence of the Grand Festivals

Guided by the teaching that “the highest form of reverence is prayer,” we offer our prayers and gratitude to *Tenjinchigi*, the Universal Life Force – the source of our lives – during the Grand Festivals.

We also offer our prayers and appreciation to our ancestors, who have passed the precious gift of life from the Universal Life Force from generation to generation without interruption. We honor, as well, the blessings of Nature that sustain and nourish our lives.

In return for our expressions of gratitude, we receive the greatest blessing of all: our very existence, our own precious lives.

Gedatsu Kongo teaches us that the essence of the Grand Festival – and the noblest act of all – is to revere and pray to everything around us, going beyond the boundaries of time and space, life and death.

Today, I would like to share some experiences I had earlier this year.

In March, I had the opportunity to visit New York as a member of the Youth Peace Study Mission of the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan.

I visited the site of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon – the sites of the tragic events of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001. As I offered a moment of silence for the victims, I found myself reflecting not only on the horror of terrorism, but also on the wars and conflicts occurring around the world today and on the meaning of peace in our modern world.

(Continued on page 6)

(Sermon – continued from page 5)

We also visited Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C., where I found an inscription on a certain monument. The words expressed respect and remembrance for the men and women of the United States Marine Corps who had given their lives for their country since the founding of the United States.

The memorial also listed the names of places around the world where American soldiers had fought for their country. These included places where Japan and the United States fought during World War II: Pearl Harbor, Midway, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. It also listed the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the war in Afghanistan, the Iraq War, and other major conflicts of the past.

These were all battlefields where the United States and other nations had fought one another as enemies.

As I looked at these names, one question came to my mind: What, truly, is justice?

When nations become enemies and fight one another, each side holds its own sense of justice. Those conflicting ideals collide, producing winners and losers. At times, the victors trample upon the defeated, while countless sacrifices are made on the battlefield and precious lives are lost.

Is it acceptable to trample upon another nation's sense of justice in order to uphold our own? Are we human beings even capable of correctly recognizing the true nature of justice?

Look for Justice within One's Heart

I believe the answer to this question can be found in Gedatsu Kongo's words: "You need only to focus on polishing your own soul and drawing closer to the heart of God."

Every one of us is born into this world as an innocent baby, beginning life with the hope and aspiration to live a pure and righteous life. Yet, as we go through life, selfishness, arrogance, and desires arising from various circumstances can stand in our way.

Because of this, not everyone is able to live a life that can always be called truly righteous.

We can see this clearly by looking at the condition of the world today.

That is why I believe it is so important for us to follow Gedatsu Kongo's teachings, honor God and our ancestors, polish the soul we have been given by God, and strive each day to live closer to the heart of God.

The societies that surround us remain in a state of turmoil. In our daily lives, through television and social media, we constantly see brutal acts and crimes that take human lives and show no signs of decreasing.

We feel heartbroken and helpless when we witness cruel and cold-blooded acts in which people deceive others, take possessions by force, and act with no regard for family bonds or even the basic humanity of others.

On the global stage, beginning with the war between Russia and Ukraine and the situation in Iran, conflicts and wars show no signs of abating. Instead, they are becoming increasingly complex and numerous.

Before he died, Gedatsu Kongo offered the following guidance: "A storm will eventually clear, but when will the human heart clear? Reflect deeply upon this. The rain that kills can become the rain that gives life."

Reflect Deeply, Choose Wisely

Because we live in such times, we must ask ourselves how we intend to use our lives and forge our own paths – both as human beings and as Gedatsu students.

Will we use our lives to deceive, hurt, and bring sorrow to others? Or will we live with love in our hearts, show compassion, and bring peace to others? We, as Gedatsu students, earnestly pray that we will always choose the path of love.

I sincerely pray that this Fall Festival, which Gedatsu Kongo left to us as the most sacred event of our lives, will serve as a major turning point for all of us – a time to renew our hearts, deepen our gratitude, and strive to elevate our character to new heights of spiritual growth.

Let us remember the gratitude expressed in our centennial message: "Thank You for 100 Years. Let Us Carry It Forward to 200 Years."

As Gedatsu students, let us carry forward the precious teachings, prayers, and spirit that have been entrusted to us by Gedatsu Kongo to create a peaceful, compassionate world for future generations.

In closing, I again offer my heartfelt congratulations to you all on this auspicious occasion. I sincerely pray for your health, happiness and success.



AUGUST 2026 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$13,838

General Donations: A. Sebe, Anonymous (\$1,000), J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, J. Mastalski, M/M J. Horner (\$600), No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M R. Tateishi, S. McSwain, M/M S. Arase

Special Acknowledgments

J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation in memory of Morizo Tanaka, Akiko Tateishi, Shimaie Tateishi
M/M D. Tsuboi	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service with gratitude
M/M D. Ide	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Konami Ide, Toshio Ide, Kuma Kotabe Ide, Rinpei Kino, Yoshiye Ide Obu, Kiyota Mishima
J. Tanaka	Appreciation and gratitude for Benzaiten and Rokujizo Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude for Benzaiten, Rokujizo and Appreciation Service
B. Yamamura	Fall Festival appreciation
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for Benzaiten, Rokujizo and Appreciation Services
M/M C. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude monthly donation
S. Mullins	Sacramento Spiritual Center appreciation (\$10,000)

Southern California Total: \$5,892

General Donations: M/M R. Allum, M/M K. Chinen, M/M N. Chodor, A. DeWitt, K. Fujii (\$1,000), M/M M. Hamada, M/M T. Hirami, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, S. Kaku, A. Kojima, M/M T. Kojima, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M T. Matsumoto, Anonymous (\$500), M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, P. Muronaka, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, C. Shiraishi, M/M A. Shiroishi, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, M. Takahashi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

M/M M. Hamada	"Never Forgotten" Service for Nora Ayako Toguchi
De. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shige Ishida, Shizuye Shiroishi, Aaron Chodor, Eryn Nakamura
T. Ishida	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shige Ishida and Shizuye Shiroishi
M/M S. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shige Ishida, Shizuye Shiroishi, Aaron Chodor, Eryn Nakamura
Tomita/Katako Family	Tomita and Katako Family memorial appreciation service
M/M N. Chodor	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shige Ishida, Shizuye Shiroishi and Aaron Chodor
J. Mah	In memory of Margaret Oyanagi
Y. Oishi	"Never Forgotten" for Masakazu Oishi
Do. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shige Ishida, Shizuye Shiroishi, Aaron Chodor, Eryn Nakamura
M/M S. Mukai	"Never Forgotten" Service for Mas Akiyoshi
M/M T. Matsumoto	"Never Forgotten" Service for Shoji Kasamoto, Junji Nakaguchi and Yoko Hirayama
A. Yokota / R. Cooley	Tomita and Katako Family memorial appreciation service
T. Kojima	Recovery from Illness

Online Donations: Total: \$353

General: D. Allum, J. Kitamura, S. Shiroishi, W. Young, H. Tsujimura, R. Sakamoto, G. Hass, J. Reid

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



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Fall Festival Message from the Board of Directors



Joyce Reid
Vice-chairman

Good morning, everyone. On behalf of the Board of Directors of Gedatsu Church USA, I congratulate you on the celebration of the Grand Fall Festival.

As we enjoy this bright and beautiful day, you may recall that at last year's Fall Festival, a dark cloud of uncertainty hung over our heads. Our Gedatsu Church was facing serious financial challenges, which led the Board of Directors to make the difficult decision to place the Sacramento property on the market.

Since then, we have reported that the financial outlook for our church has improved, albeit modestly, and we have been able to retain our Goreichi grounds. Through the implementation of significant cost-cutting measures and after a comprehensive review of the church's financial condition, we have been able to maintain a modest but positive financial position.

While this news is encouraging, we continue to face significant obstacles that threaten our ability to ensure sustainable growth and long-term stability of our church. These challenges include a declining and aging membership, marginal funding, difficulty attracting and retaining younger members and families, and the need to develop future leaders.

This summer, the Board established a Steering Committee with the responsibility and authority to address these challenges with energy and urgency. Our Committee – composed of Reverend Takao Kojima, Allen Shiroishi, Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi, Deacon June Tanaka, and myself – is meeting weekly by Zoom to plan and organize key initiatives that will be essential to securing the future of our church.

The success of this effort will depend not only on the work of the Steering Committee, but also on the active participation and support of our members, who can help by sharing their ideas, knowledge, experience, and concerns. There is a role for everyone who cares about the future of our Gedatsu Church.

As Gedatsu members, we are deeply grateful for the many ways that Gedatsu has enriched our lives. Now is the time for each of us to ask ourselves: "What can I do to help my church?" and "How can I repay Gedatsu Kongo for the blessings I have received?"

These are not easy questions, but they are important ones. The future of our Gedatsu Church will depend not only on the decisions made by our leaders, but also on the willingness of each of us to contribute to the life and future of our church.

We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of our members. Your donations and continued financial support play a vital role in maintaining the stability of our church and preserving our sacred Goreichi grounds. With your continued dedication, cooperation, and support, the Board of Directors is confident that, together, we can overcome the challenges before us and build a strong, vibrant, and sustainable future for Gedatsu Church USA.

We will continue to keep you updated on our church's activities. Thank you.