

GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA

www.gedatsu-usa.org

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Family is the foundation of a country,
and a couple is the basis of
human morality."*

The present world seems to be full of miseries. There are many conflicts among nations, and violence prevails throughout the world.

Who would want the world to remain this way? While we all wish for world peace, how can world peace actually be realized?

We should be aware that at its fundamental base, our world consists of families and individuals. Therefore, we should start from this base – ourselves and our families.

First, make our everyday life happy and peaceful. This is the beginning of world peace.



UPDATE ON GEDATSU CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Because COVID-19 transmission rates remain high in our communities, all regularly scheduled in-person services and activities in our churches continue to be suspended for the foreseeable months ahead.

Sun Spirit Services

Gedatsu members traditionally attend Sun Spirit services in February. This year, services will be held virtually. Watch for announcements of date and time. More on page 2.

Earlier Time for Wednesday Evening Prayers

The weekly Wednesday evening prayer session is now held an hour earlier – at 7 pm PT – via Zoom or phone. **Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe** leads the group in chanting the Heart Sutra. To join, go to the Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89182635066>

Meeting ID: 891 8263 5066. If you have questions, contact **Joy Sebe** at joysebe@gmail.com.

Minister Support

Our ministers are always available to support members and friends by phone, videoconferencing and other means for private consultations, family blessings and memorial services.

To arrange a service or consultation, contact your local church:

- Los Angeles Church: **Rev. Naoya Okano** (626) 288-1212
naoya_okano@gedatsu-usa.org
- Sacramento Spiritual Center: **Ms. Mica Rodriguez**
(916) 363-6054 gedatsuchurchsac@gmail.com



February “Never Forgotten” Online Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held every month to honor the memory of those who have passed away during that particular month. The services are video recorded and viewable at the time of each service on the Gedatsu YouTube site. A digital link to the video is emailed to members on the morning of the service.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, February 7, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Anna May Kao, Ted Sekikawa, Helen Sekikawa, Karl Kaoru Tanaka, Noboru Tateishi, Hisaye (Kino) Ide, Roku Kino, Yoritaro Tsuboi, Kaneko (Ide) Hatae, George Hughley and Yasuko (Noritake) Tsuboi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, February 14, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Kimiye Akiyoshi, Masue Akiyoshi, Hideo Fujii, Mariko Fukumoto, Masato Fukumoto, Scott Hamamoto, Tadayoshi Ishida, Yvonne Ishida, Nancy Michiyo Ito, Morio Kaku, Fumiko Makishi, Kofuku Makishi, Kimiko Matsugami, John Seiki Mitsuuchi, Tadashi Mochida, Kesao Naito, Kikuko Naito, Shoichi Naito, Tomokata Naito, Horace Kazumori Nakamura, Chikajiro Nishi, Koto Nishi, Miyo Linda Okayama, Masanobu Sakuma, Yoshinosuke John Sakuma, Don Makoto Shiba, Sayoko Dorothy Shiroishi, Karl Tanaka and Ishi Yuzuki.**

Obituaries

The Sacramento Spiritual Center mourns the loss of member **Alan Masayuki Taketa**, who passed away of lung/kidney cancer on November 18 in Boise, Idaho at the age of 66. He is survived by his mother **Fujiko Taketa**; sisters, **Cathy Sunahara** and **Nancy Horner**; brothers, **John** and **Lawrence Taketa**; and brother-in-law, **John Horner**. Alan worked for many years with his late father **Masao** and brother **Kenneth**, maintaining the *Goreichi* grounds.

The L.A. Church sadly reports that long-time member, **Frank Miyamura**, passed away on January 5 at the age of 74 following a long illness. The son of the late **Kay Miyamura**, he is survived by his sisters, **Frances** and **Joyce**.

Sun Spirit Services

On February 11, 1940, **Gedatsu Kongo** dedicated the Sun Spirit Monument on the grounds of the *Goreichi* in Japan as a symbolic expression of the spiritual significance of the sun. The Founder stated that the sun reflects the Truth aspect of the three virtues – Truth, Goodness and Beauty – which exemplify the harmony of the human character.

The monument – with its large red circular sun image at its center and Japanese characters for *seishin*, or “spirit” – was erected to impress upon the minds of people everywhere the importance of cultivating the spiritual qualities of the sun: selflessness, fairness and endless compassion. The everlasting light and heat from the sun are attributed as the sacred source of life, which the sun gives freely to all living things on earth without taking anything in return.

Gedatsu members traditionally attend the Sun Spirit services in February to recognize and give thanks to the sun for its gifts and significance in our lives. This year, because of the pandemic, services will be held virtually. Watch for announcements of date and time.

GEDATSU KONGO APPRECIATION FUND

The Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund (*Hosankai*) allows members to show their appreciation to Gedatsu Kongo and demonstrate a higher level of commitment and support for the church. Participation in the Fund requires an annual pledge of \$600 a year, or \$50 per month, in addition to the general membership dues.

2020 Appreciation Fund Donors

Katsuo/Kazumi Chinen	Reiko Nakamura
Dan/Mary Harada	Teruko Nakamura
John/Nancy Horner	Minaye Okada
Dave/Penny Ide	Tom Okimura
Tadao Ishida	Paul/Joyce Reid
JoAnn Kaku	Sam/Harriet Sekikawa
Mary Kimura	June Tanaka
Tetsuya/ Sachiyo Matsumoto	Sadaye Tanaka
Victor/Marian Mizokami	Dennis/Judy Tsuboi
Diana Mukai	Howard/Carole Tsujimura

Church Receives Generous Gifts

Gedatsu Church is the grateful recipient of extraordinary gifts from **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe** and **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito**, who each donated 1,000 shares of stock – each gift valued at \$173,000. Over the years, Jackson’s remarkable investment acumen, and his and Rev. Sebe’s financial generosity, have significantly contributed to the church’s financial stability and growth.



In the following article, Jackson explains the “divine guidance” behind his extraordinary investment success.

At left, Sr. Deacon Jackson Ito and Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe

Guardian Angels Assist Successful Life and Hereafter

By Senior Deacon Jackson Ito

I have been investing in the stock market successfully for many years. Besides investing for myself, family, relatives and friends, as Gedatsu Church treasurer, I have been investing the church’s extra cash in stocks, supplementing the church’s income.

In the past, my annual rate of return had been about 15% to 25%, including occasional years of zero gain or even losses. Over the last four years, however, my gains have increased to 40% to 70%.

To what do I attribute this recent growth acceleration? I credit the activities that began in December 2016, when I was asked to speak before the Japan *Gedatsu-kai* Youth Propagation Conference – to recount my personal experiences in Gedatsu and how it benefitted my life.

In preparation for the two-day conference, I arrived in Japan a week earlier with **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe** to meet with the Youth Propagation Committee. During our spare time before the conference, Rev. Sebe asked me to accompany him to the Kisarazu branch to meet **Taiko Sugimoto Sensei**, who was about 90 years old at that time. She had studied directly under **Master Gedatsu Kongo** since childhood with her mother.

Within five minutes of our meeting, and without a single conversation between us, she described me exactly – precisely the way **Bishop Kishida** “read” me when I was

a 10-year-old child. At that time, my lack of experience prevented me from asking him how I could advance spiritually. I immediately realized that, with Sugimoto Sensei, I was being given a second opportunity to do so.

The next year, when **Bishop Teruo Okano** invited me to attend the 2017 Youth Conference, I did not hesitate to accept, but I replied that I wished to attend not only the December conference, but the Japan Fall Festival in October, as well. In addition, during the intervening two months, I wanted to visit as many Gedatsu branches throughout Japan as possible. Bishop Okano approved these visits, as well as my request to have **Rev. Hisakazu Taki** accompany me as travel guide and translator. Our two-month travel schedule ultimately resulted in our visiting 30 to 35 branches, roughly 10 percent of *Gedatsu-kai*’s 300 branches, as well as the six regional headquarters.

[Incidentally, I had always planned to personally pay all expenses related to Rev. Taki’s and my two months’ travel. Between the time I accepted Bishop Okano’s invitation and the trip, my stock profits increased to well exceed the expenses we incurred!]

Gedatsu Kongo had already shown us the way [to advance spiritually] in the opening words of our daily prayer

Before the 2017 Fall Festival, Rev. Sebe and I spent three days studying with Sugimoto Sensei. Those were the most valuable three days since I joined Gedatsu. My primary objective was to ask her how I could advance spiritually to *Bosatsu*, the ninth of the ten levels of *Shugendo*.^{*} She explained that Master Gedatsu Kongo had already shown us the way in the opening words of our daily prayer: the highest level of Universal Life Force (*Ten Jin Chigi*), which is all encompassing, followed immediately by the second most important guardian angels (*Go Shiki Ogami*), local guardian deities (*Ujigami*) and all of Nature’s deities (*Yao Yorozu Ogami*). Sugimoto Sensei explained to me in detail the special attributes and blessings received from each of the five guardian angels. I shared what I learned throughout my visits with each of the branches after the Fall Festival.

(Continued on back page)

^{*} The ancient Japanese spiritual practice in which Gedatsu has its roots and the ten levels of consciousness

SHINKO (Sincere Practice)

By Gedatsu Kongo

Translated by Rev. Hisakazu Taki

In Search of God

Where should we seek the invisible God?

It shouldn't be like seeing ghosts. We definitely must not entertain illusionary visions or irrelevant ideas of the heavenly entity.

The principal process, for all of us, is to discern God's true nature and intuitively comprehend its essence through phenomena.

The essence of God is the perfect coordination of the universe, acme of Truth, Goodness and Beauty, and absolute love and power. It is omniscient and omnipotent. These essential functions are being executed by the organization of the divine realm in the hands of the Universal Life Force. Therefore, we can get a glimpse of and revere the essence of God through every phenomenon in the universe.

In Nature, within the movement of celestial bodies, within the gentle transition of rivers and mountains, wind and water, in the growing of a tree and a blade of grass, humans should be able to discover the magnificent goodness and beauty of divine nature and the impeccable grandeur of providence. Nature especially liberates humans from earthly desires and instantly enraptures humans to the divine world. Shrines are made by humans, but originally, they were the sites where divine spirits were enshrined and worshipped. The pure atmosphere of the sacred sites and the sincere hearts of those who pay homage naturally make one want to pray to God.

If one peruses materials on ancient and modern historical facts or the teachings of the sages or the widely accepted true and wise sayings of the people, there are numerous items which enable one to perceive God.

Even in the articles of the daily newspapers, you may find many such examples. It is said that an innocent child is just like God, because the child has no falsehood or defilement.

If you come in search, you may perceive that God exists everywhere, even among the confusion of community life and personal affairs.

In the Universe, which God commands and governs, there is no reason for God not to permeate.



Gedatsu Q&A - Part 8

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

Q *What is the significance of property blessing?*

A One of the important practices for Gedatsu members is performing *Amacha* blessing by pouring holy tea over *Kuyo* plaques.

Another form of holy tea blessing is property blessing. Property blessing is performed by spreading the holy tea on the ground for consoling all souls and spirits connected to the property, appreciating their blessings, and having them rest in peace.

The land on which we live today has various connections to many people and living things since ancient times. In America, Native Americans formerly lived throughout the country before European people came to live here. In many ways, our life today is possible because of the sacrifice and blessings of these Native Americans. Therefore, it is important to thank them for the blessings we have received from them.

It is important to perform property blessing from time to time and express gratitude to all the souls and spirits connected to our property.

That is why we should perform property blessing. By spreading holy tea on the ground of our properties, we express gratitude for their great blessings. Through this practice, our sense of appreciation will be cultivated more and more deeply. The souls and spirits connected to our properties will then be happy and peaceful, and they will protect us and our properties.

We should always remember that we receive immeasurable blessings from our communities and the property on which we currently reside. Therefore, it is important to perform property blessing from time to time and express gratitude to all the souls and spirits connected to our property. It is also important to try to be always good to our neighbors and actively work for the benefit of our community.

Q *Why do we perform Hiho meditation?*

A *Hiho meditation* is mental training to cultivate our mindfulness.

Our mind is like a mad monkey that tends to be easily distracted by various thoughts, desires and emotions – often making us feel unsettled and confused.

I think everyone has this kind of mental experience when we try to practice meditation. It is hard to control our mind. Meditation is an effective method to control and calm our mind.

Mindfulness is the mental state of attention, alertness, relaxation, and calmness. Our regular practice of *Hiho* meditation, as taught by the Gedatsu Church, allows us to naturally achieve this state of mind.

When riding a bicycle, the way we keep the bike balanced is with a lot of micro-recoveries. When the bike tilts a little to the left, we recover by adjusting it slightly to the right, and when it tilts a little to the right, we adjust it slightly to the left. By performing micro-recoveries quickly and often, we create the effect of continuous upright balance.

We can make the same adjustments with our mind. As we continue to practice meditation, we will be able to recover a wandering attention quickly and often, and if we recover attention quickly and often enough, we create the effect of continuous attention.

(Continued on page 6)

(Gedatsu Q&A – continued from page 5)

Imagine a pot of water full of sediments. Now, imagine that pot being constantly shaken and agitated. The water appears cloudy. When we stop agitating the pot and allow it to rest, the water becomes calm. After a while, all the sediments settle, and the water appears clear.

Similarly, when we continue to practice meditation, our mind becomes less agitated and, eventually, becomes calm and clear. As a result, we become more relaxed and alert. Amazing!

If this sounds unbelievable, why don't you try practicing meditation. You will then see how wonderful it is!

Q *How do we perform Hiho meditation?*

A When we perform *Hiho* meditation, we hold the holy *Hiho* between our palms. The holy *Hiho* is a paper amulet, which represents the Universal Life Force. When we meditate holding this amulet, we place our complete and unconditional trust in the Universal Life Force. Our mind and body will then be properly aligned to the Universal Life cycle.

When we perform meditation, we may be distracted by various thoughts and emotions in our mind. If that happens, the first thing we do is simply focus our attention to the process of our breathing. No other effort is needed than be aware of our breath and to bring our attention to it. Breath is the key to regaining our mental balance.

Meditation is not to think of various things. Rather, it is to keep our attention on the process of breathing. When we get distracted by a sound, a thought, or a sensation, experience it without judging it, and let it go. We then return to following our breath. Repeat this process many times. This is meditation. Through the regular practice of meditation, mindfulness will be naturally restored within us.

I strongly recommend the practice of three-minute meditation before going to bed every evening. It is the time to enjoy "just being." Mindfulness is the mind of just being.

All we need to do is to pay attention moment-to-moment without judging. Just sit on a chair or on the floor, and bring consistent attention to our breath for three minutes. That's it. Every time our attention wanders away, we just bring it back very gently. This daily meditation practice deepens the inherent calmness and clarity in our mind. It opens up the possibility of fully appreciating each moment in life. This is a life-changing practice!

This daily meditation practice deepens the inherent calmness and clarity in our mind. It opens up the possibility of fully appreciating each moment in life. This is a life-changing practice!

Meditation is not harsh training. It is, in fact, a very enjoyable practice. But we are usually bound by our habitual ways, so it may be hard to change our habits.

This is the challenge. Let's start a new habit in our everyday life. All we need is a little effort to change our lifestyle. Self-growth comes from overcoming resistance.

By making meditation practice part of our everyday routine, after a few weeks or months of starting regular meditation practice, we can reap the rewards. We have more energy. Our mind becomes calmer, clearer, and more joyful. We get sick less. Our social life improves because we smile more. We feel great about ourselves.

Regular meditation practice will bring about all these wonderful benefits for our life.



DECEMBER 2020 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$3,900

General Donations: M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, R. Nakatani, S. Nishino, M/M S. Sekikawa

Special Acknowledgments

A. Sebe Spiritual Fund (\$2,000)
 A. Sebe Gedatsu Kongo Birthday
 J. Ito Gedatsu Kongo Birthday
 R. Nakatani Gedatsu Kongo Birthday
 M/M R. Ito Year end (\$500)

A. Sebe 1,000 shares of NovoCure stock (\$173,000 value)
 J. Ito 1,000 shares of NovoCure stock (\$173,000 value)
 (See story on page 3)

Southern California Total: \$6,933

General Donations: S. Bush, K. Fujii, M/M M. Hamada, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M V. Mizokami, M. Nakamura, T. Nakamura, E. Ogawa, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, A. Okimura, T. Okimura, M. Sakata, M/M S. Shaklan, D. Shiroishi, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M/ M. Tsujimura, M/M R. Tusujimura M/M P. Young

Special Acknowledgments

F. Sueyoshi "Never Forgotten" service
 T/K Hiram One-year memorial service for Glen Hiram
 T/T Fukushima Special appreciation (\$1,000)
 Kubota Mortuary One-year donation
 T. Ishida "Never Forgotten" service
 D. Mukai "Never Forgotten" service
 T. Ishida 2020 year-end donation
 M. Mizokami Special appreciation
 J. Ito In memory of Bishop Kishida (\$500)
 N/Y Okano Appreciation for end-of-year stay at church residence (\$1,000)
 De. Shiroishi Appreciation for blessing in 2020 and 2021
 M. Kimura Year-end donation
 K/I Kuritani Year-end donation
 H/C Tsujimura Year-end donation
 H/C Tsujimura Successful surgery
 T. Murakami "Never Forgotten" service
 T. Murakami Son's successful surgery and return to work

Online Donations: Total: \$779

General: T. Palelek, N. Tsuboi, M/M P. Reid, D. Ide, H. Tsujimura

Special Acknowledgments

J. Hamamoto "Never Forgotten" service
 A. Kishida In memory of Archbishop Kishida

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

MEMBER SHARE AND CARE

As Gedatsu members, we are part of a caring community that celebrates the joys of all members and supports them when they are in need. If you would like supportive prayers from fellow members when you face health issues or difficult times, let us know. Or if you just want to share some happy news, let us know that, too.



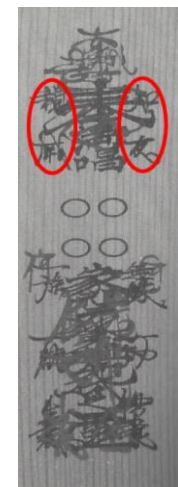
L.A. Church member **Arlene Okimura** has begun radiation treatment in conjunction with her a six-month chemotherapy program to treat neuroendocrine cancer, which was diagnosed in late July. Arlene believes in the positive energy and support from others. So, please be a part of her "prayer circle" by sending Arlene positive thoughts, prayers and wishes for her recovery.



Long-time L.A. Gedatsu member, **Deacon Rudy Tsujimura**, is recovering from successful pancreatic surgery. *Goho* practice before his surgery assured him that the surgery would be successful. "I was told to have absolute appreciation and gratitude every day," says Rudy. "I'm working on it."

Holy Tea Blessing for Friends, Acquaintances

By offering prayers and holy tea blessings, we play an active, supportive role in helping dear ones through difficult times. When offering holy tea blessing, **Rev. Naoya** stresses the importance of pouring tea over the appropriate plaque – "which is like sending a letter to the correct postal address." He explains:



"When offering holy tea blessing for friends and acquaintances, it is best to pour the holy tea over the plaque that reads 'All Ancestor Souls . . .' (shown at left and #1 in the *kuyo* plaques order form). This plaque is appropriate for praying for others because 'Relatives, Acquaintances and Friends' is specifically written in Japanese on the plaque (circled). The ancestors of the person you are praying for can receive blessings through this plaque. If you don't have plaque #1, the plaque that reads 'All Unrested Souls and Spirits of the Universe' (plaque #31) is also appropriate."



The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Katsuo Chinen** of the L.A. Gedatsu Church. He and his wife, **Kazumi**, have three sons and live in West Covina. Members since 2006, the Chinens were introduced to Gedatsu by L.A. member, **Sachiyo Matsumoto**.

Katsuo is a martial arts instructor, teaching *Kendo* at the Gedatsu *Kendo Dojo*. His current *Kendo* ranking is *Kyoushi 7-Dan*. In his spare time from his work as a gardener, Katsuo enjoys fishing, especially being taken by his kids on a deep-sea fishing boat every year on Father's Day.

Editorial Staff

Joyce Reid, Editor

Rev. Naoya Okano, adviser

Mica Rodriguez, minister-in-training, adviser

Editorial contributors to this issue:

Katsuo Chinen, Kazumi Chinen, Dave Ide, Sr. Deacon

Jackson Ito, John Horner, Nancy Horner, Marilyn

Nakamura, Arlene Okimura, Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe, Joy Sebe,

Sam Sekikawa, Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi, Rev. Hisakazu Taki,

Deacon Rudy Tsujimura

(Guardian Angels – continued from page 3)

An important lesson Sugiimoto Sensei taught was that to advance spiritually, we had to relinquish our materially motivated internal consciousness through meditation in order to receive external divine guidance.

So, how has this helped my investment success? First of all, one guardian angel (*Oguchi Shin*) helps me receive data and recognize its relative importance; another (*Okuni Nushi*) helps me analyze and evaluate comparative benefits. After blessings are received, it is necessary to express appreciation and gratitude to yet another guardian angel (*Santoku Dai Myojin*) – just as we express appreciation to the *Ryujin* water guardian for the circulation of water from the sea, to the mountains, down rivers and back to the sea.

Water is a blessing of Nature, but unless it is allowed to circulate, it stagnates. Similarly, profits gained through the guidance of the Universal Life Force need to be used for the benefit of others. If profits are hoarded for one's personal use alone, stock prices will fall, and profits will return as losses.

Gedatsu Church USA

Los Angeles Branch

7850 Hill Drive

Rosemead, CA 91770

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By suppressing materialistic passions in investment decisions, more objective visions of future outcomes become apparent. But this benefit should not be limited to financial goals in our physical lifetime.

Advancing ourselves spiritually benefits the contentment of our afterlife for eternity.

What has longer lasting effects is how advancing ourselves spiritually benefits the contentment of our afterlife for eternity. Just as divine guidance can open consciousness of possible material outcomes, divine guidance can provide a preview of our outlook on our daily lives while still living. Having this outlook on our daily conduct while living affects how we conduct our lives in accordance with the Universal Law, minimizing behavior our souls will regret in our afterlife.

That is the true benefit we receive by heeding the message from our guardian angels.



(To be continued)