



# GEDATSU COMPANION

GEDATSU CHURCH USA  
www.gedatsu-usa.org

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## Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"If you desire happiness,  
exert effort in your duties  
with heart and soul."*

Many people believe that happiness exists somewhere far away, but is that so?

Are you familiar with the fairy tale, "The Blue Bird"? This story tells us that the blue bird of happiness\* is near us.

Stop looking elsewhere for happiness. The truth is, happiness is always in front of us.

Put forth your sincerest efforts in your present duties. You will then be able to create a good life.

\* See Bluebird on back page

**Photo: The delicate new leaves of a mulberry tree frame a springtime view of the *Gochi* Sanctuary of the Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento.**



## APRIL AND MAY ACTIVITIES

Due to COVID-19, in-person services and activities remain suspended. The L.A. and Sacramento Regional Boards continue to monitor the situation and will announce any changes in their respective regions.

### April

- **"Never Forgotten" Memorial Services**  
Sunday, April 4 at 10 a.m. PST (details on page 2)
- **Spring Grand Festival and *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony**  
Streaming live on Sunday, April 11 at 11 a.m. PST  
Scaled-back services at Sacramento Spiritual Center. No attendance by members. No personal *Saito Goma* plaques. The livestreamed services will be viewable on YouTube. Watch for announcements.

### May

- **Appreciation Service** – Sunday, May 16 at 11 a.m. PST  
Livestreamed from the L.A. Church

### Weekly

- **Wednesday Evening Prayers** at 7 pm PST via Zoom
  - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89182635066>  
Meeting ID: 891 8263 5066

### Monthly

- **Regional Boards** meet via Zoom
  - Sacramento – First Sundays at 11 a.m.
  - Los Angeles – Fourth Mondays at 4:30 p.m.

### Message from the Gedatsu Church

#### **Anti-Asian Hate Crimes in Our Communities**

Against the backdrop of the COVID pandemic and growing racial tensions across the U.S., we have seen an alarming increase in the number of incidents labeled as hate crimes against Asians, particularly in Asian communities on the West and East Coasts. These incidents include attacks against individuals of Asian descent, as well as institutions, churches and organizations serving these communities – ranging from harassment, theft, and vandalism to bodily injury and destruction of property.

We, as Gedatsu Church members and part of the broad Asian community, may feel saddened, pained and even angered by these senseless acts of discrimination and hate. In the past, our own church properties have been targets of incidents of vandalism and discrimination.

Our primary concern is the safety and well-being of our members and churches – just as it has been with the pandemic. That is why we want to raise awareness of this situation among our members and take extra precautions to safeguard our members and facilities.

We caution our Asian members to be vigilant and safe at all times. Unfortunately, elderly Asians are targeted because of their vulnerability. When out in public, hide purses and valuables from being targets for theft. Those who can help our elderly members by escorting them in public, please do so.

To protect and safeguard our churches, our regional boards are reaching out to professional security firms to assess our facilities and install security systems as needed.

Spiritually, in our daily prayers, we can ask the Universal Life Force, guardian angels and ancestors to protect and guide us in our daily lives.

Above all, as Gedatsu students, we can support these efforts by practicing Master Gedatsu Kongo's teaching of inclusiveness, tolerance and compassion – for victims and perpetrators alike – promoting peace, prosperity and happiness for everyone.



#### **April “Never Forgotten” Online 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. Because our churches are currently closed, our “Never Forgotten” 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, April 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Norma Tellez, Natsuko Nakatani, Masashi Russell Ota, Arthur Sakamoto, Susumu Suyeyasu, Henry Toshio Tateishi, Tsutomu Ben Tsuboi, Sally Yukiko Tsuboi, Keiji Tsuboi, Chiyoko Suzuki, Keiichi Takemura, Katherine Kazue Tanaka and Thomas Taro Takahashi.**

This month, the L.A. Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” service on the first Sunday: **Sunday, April 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Maria Lechuga Covos, Sameko Hamaoka, Ted Tadashi Hayashi, Sadao Hirano, Kazuye Ito, Will Karger, Fumiko Kawamura, Karen Mineko Kawamura, William Masami Kawamura, Yoshimi Richard Kikuchi, Masaichi Richard Kikuta, Thomas Mahoney, Matsuko Yamashita Miyasako, Clifton Mizokami, Kinryo Mizuki, Seiichiro Mizutani, Yoshinobu Nakamura, Yoshinobu Nakamura, Osamu Naruko, Harry Odama, Otomatsu Odama, Tomoyo Ogura, Akiko Okazaki, Emiko Okimura, Helen Shiroishi, Hidemi Pat Shiroishi, Dayna Slotnik, Tsutako Sherrie Takimoto, Bobby Kiyoshi Tanji, Shigeno Tomita, Henry Tsujimura, Alice Tsukamaki, Joseph Harold Wessman, Jr., Dr. Tsuyoshi Yamashita and Enes S. Sarvello Zeto.**

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#### **Obituary**

The L.A. Gedatsu Church sadly reports that long-time member, **Eiko Louise Onishi**, passed away peacefully on January 24 at the age of 93. She is survived by her children, **Terry (Kathy) Onishi** and **Cynthia Kawahara**; four grandchildren; five great grandchildren; and many nieces and nephews. Her funeral service was held at the L.A. Church on February 27.

## **SHINKO (Sincere Practice)**

**By Gedatsu Kongo**

**Translated by Rev. Hisakazu Taki**

### **Ancestor Spirits**

*We receive incalculable protection and guidance from our ancestor spirits.*

*We well know that when parents are alive, they bestow unlimited affection upon their children. However, because parents are mortal and are bound by various worldly restrictions, even with parental love, things may not go as expected and may be inconsistent. Once parents die and enter the spiritual realm, however, their affection becomes pure and perfect because they are no longer constrained by physical life.*

*When we yearn for our parents, we are able to feel their affections very keenly. The same applies to our dear ancestors. Ancestor spirits confer especially affectionate protection to direct descendants.*

*Our real miseries and joys are, at the same time, our ancestors'. Likewise, their sufferings and delights are instantly transmitted to us.*

*We are, ever, one with ancestors . It can be said that we are the crystallization of our ancestor spirits.*

*Our remote ancestor spirits dwell in the Divine realm. However, our recent ancestor spirits are usually still in the common spiritual world. Communication between the spiritual and present physical worlds are incessant. I also believe that it is the same between the higher and lower planes of the spiritual world. When the protection provided by our ancestor spirits is insufficient, assistance from the higher realm is forthcoming. The Divine realm, needless to say, being in contact with myriads of gods and deities, is absolutely infinite.*

*We can perceive the workings of the spiritual realm, which are just like those of the present physical world. Further, through the mechanism of the spiritual world, we can also get a humble glimpse of the administration of the Divine realm.*

*Ancestor spirits are, indeed, the best guide to bringing us closer to God. Therefore, it is essential that those who wish to worship God should pay respects to ancestor spirits first.*

*Even those who do not believe in God should, at least, be able to acknowledge the spirits of their intimate ancestors.*

*To enshrine ancestor spirits, respect and rely on their guidance and protection is the most natural course to eventual belief in God.*



## Gedatsu Q&A - Part 10

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

### **Q**     *Why do we perform Holy Goho practice?*

**A**     The purpose of Holy *Goho* practice is to deepen our self-understanding by gaining awareness of the connection between ourselves and our ancestors.

We inherit the physical and spiritual DNA of our parents and ancestors that makes us who we are. We may possess many good qualities that we have received from them. For this, we should be thankful to them. At the same time, however, we may have inherited negative qualities from them, which we should strive to correct in order to create a positive and happy life. However, it is actually very hard for us to change our habits and behavior, because we are usually too self-centered to see negative points within ourselves. That's why it is important to perform Holy *Goho* practice.

Holy *Goho* practice is a spiritual practice that is unique to the Gedatsu Church. Its goal is to cultivate one's character by disciplining one's mind and soul. It is performed by meditating and holding a sacred amulet containing holy characters written by **Founder Gedatsu Kongo**. *Goho* practice enables one to experience and communicate with spiritual entities. It is performed in the presence of an experienced teacher, who can correctly interpret the spiritual communications and provide appropriate instruction.

**When we perform Holy *Goho* practice, we open the spiritual channels of communication with our ancestors and other spirits.**

When we perform Holy *Goho* practice, we open the spiritual channels of communication with our ancestors and other spirits. We are able to do so because we are deeply and profoundly linked with them.

By learning from them, we become aware that our habitual ways of thinking are linked with their ways of living in the past. We then become conscious of our negative habits and behaviors. This enlightened understanding of ourselves becomes the beginning of our new life.

Because we are human, we are not perfect. By performing Holy *Goho* practice, we become aware that our present existence is possible because of the immeasurable blessings we receive from parents and ancestors, and all people and things in the world from ancient times. At the same time, we can become aware of our negative attitudes in life. With this awareness, we can focus on changing our bad habits and becoming the kind of person who can live a happy life with appreciation.

### **Q**     *I'm uncomfortable with the practice of Holy Goho. As a Gedatsu student, is it necessary for me to perform this training?*

**A**     Our Founder stated, "There is no specific gateway to Gedatsu," which means that there are many paths in our Gedatsu study and practice.

**Everything that happens to us in our daily life, good or bad, is a lesson to learn and a challenge to grow spiritually.**

Basically, we should study and practice Gedatsu through our everyday life. Everything that happens to us in our daily life, good or bad, is a lesson to learn and a challenge to grow spiritually. However, we should be aware that our views are always biased and limited. This is a vital point in our Gedatsu study.

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Gedatsu Q&A – continued from page 4)*

We almost always believe that our thinking is right. When someone says something that aligns with our thoughts, we tend to feel comfortable and accepting. However, when someone expresses an opinion opposing our thoughts, we may feel uncomfortable or even get upset. This is human nature.

Each of us has a point of view, and we tend to stick to our own opinions. However, as long as we are humans, our views are always biased and limited. If we cling tenaciously to our own thoughts and are unwilling to consider different views, we have no chance to grow spiritually. We should be open to other's thoughts and opinions. This is the key point for our spiritual growth.

We may believe that our faith in the teaching of Gedatsu is enough, and that Holy *Goho* training is not necessary in our Gedatsu study. This is okay. But that is only *our* viewpoint on Gedatsu. Who knows what benefits we might receive from the Holy *Goho* practice? Only when we actually perform this practice can we truly determine whether we can benefit from it.

It is likely that the teachers' knowledge and experience of Gedatsu exceed ours. Why don't we follow their advice on Gedatsu practices? Let's not cling to our limited view on Gedatsu. Let's try to be open to teachers' advice and practices. We may then be able to open a door to the unknown world. Our spiritual growth is up to us.

**Q** *I admire the Gedatsu philosophy of self-reflection and self-improvement, but I can't accept that spirits exist and affect our lives. How should I study Gedatsu?*

**A** The notion that this world consists of visible and invisible things is not hard to accept. We can easily see physical and material things, but we know they are not everything that exists in this world.

For example, can we see our mind? How about our thoughts and feelings? Thoughts and feelings in our mind can't be seen, but we certainly don't deny their existence, do we?

Were we born into this world from nothing? Of course not. We were born from our parents. And our parents were born from their parents, and so on. Thus, we have a vast background of the past within ourselves.

**We are the continuation of our ancestors from ancient times . . . and are the fruit of everything in the universe.**

We must understand that we have received immeasurable blessings from generations of ancestors, from many people and from everything since time immemorial. Every one of them was necessary for us to be here now.

We can't see our ancestors, but they actually live within us now. Every day, we consume many things: food, water, air, sunlight, etc. Without these things, even a single moment of our existence is impossible. Knowingly or unknowingly, we receive immeasurable blessings from everything in the universe.

If we can't accept the notion that spirits exist, that is okay. The most important thing is to be aware that we are the continuation of our ancestors from ancient times, and that we are the fruit of everything in the universe. We will then become aware of ancestors' love and compassion for us and feel grateful for the immeasurable blessings we receive from ancestors, countless people and everything since the beginning of the world.

Let us deepen our sense of appreciation through our everyday living. Learn to feel that we are one with our ancestors, everyone and everything in the universe. This awareness will lead us to a spiritually rich life.







## Steps to Reduce Side Effects of COVID Vaccination

By Senior Deacon Jackson Ito

Most church members are younger than me. I recently had my first COVID vaccination. In preparation, I read everything I could find to anticipate what side effects I might encounter. The night before my appointment, I included the following in my evening prayer:

1. I expressed my appreciation to the scientists and medical researchers who developed the vaccine.
2. I expressed my appreciation to the factory workers who made the vaccine.
3. I expressed my appreciation to the people who helped distribute the vaccine.
4. I expressed my appreciation to the medical staff administering the vaccine.
5. I expressed my appreciation to the *Inari* guardian angel, because *Inari* is responsible for utilizing the energy resources of the soil (Earth) and its nutrients with water, energy from the sun, and carbon dioxide in the air to produce the organic Ingredients used in the vaccine.

Much to my pleasant surprise, I experienced **zero** side effects! I highly recommend that you do the same to minimize adverse side effects.

I follow a similar ritual (maybe not quite as extensive) for all medication I take.

When we say *itadaki mas* (grace) before eating, it is shorthand for expressing our appreciation to *Inari* and Nature so that the food we consume not only provides our bodies with nourishment, but also becomes medicine to augment our natural immunity.

It is important that we have this sense of appreciation when we are well – not only when we are under physical distress.



## Anti-Racism as a Spiritual Practice



If you are interested in deepening your understanding of racial justice, here is an online video series that features interviews on the intersection of religion and race with faith leaders, educators, authors, academics, activists and more. Each (30-minute) episode discusses race from a different religious point of view and how we can work together to overcome racism.

The series is hosted by Simran Jeet Singh, an American educator, writer and activist.

Singh writes: “We believe that racial justice work is as much about inner excavation as it is about social activism. This show aims to facilitate both. In each episode, we bring in an expert to speak about a particular aspect of racism, their own experiences with it, and what wisdom they can offer as we all seek to navigate these in our own lives and communities.”

To view the series, go to RNS Religion News Service at <https://religionnews.com/becoming-less-racist/#readmore-blr>

## FEBRUARY 2021 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$925

General Donations: M/M J. Horner, S. Nishino,  
R. Nakatani, M. Rodriguez, M./S. Gollas, C./K. Kakutani,  
D./L. Sunahara, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, Anonymous

#### Special Acknowledgments

R. Nakatani In memory of Roy Nakatani

### **Southern California** Total: \$2,870

General: M/M R. Allum, M/M K. Kuritani,  
M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, N/N S. Mukai,  
M. Nakamura, T. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano,  
T. Okimura, D. Shiroishi, M/M H. Tsujimura,  
M/M R. Tsujimura

#### Special Acknowledgments

M/M R. Tsujimura	Ancestor blessing
D. Mukai	"Never Forgotten" for Karl Tanaka
Makishi Family	Memorial service for Kofuku and Fumiko Makishi
T. Ishida	"Never Forgotten" for Tadayoshi Ishida
J. Kaku	"Never Forgotten" for Morio Kaku
J. Shiroishi	"Never Forgotten" for Sayako Shiroishi
J. Shiroishi	In memory of Frank Miyamura
C. Onishi Kawahara	Funeral service for Eiko Onishi (\$500)

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$492

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

#### Special Acknowledgments

M/M N. Chodar Safe and healthy recovery from  
COVID virus

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

## GEDATSU DIGITAL RESOURCES

### **Gedatsu Videos on**



Check out our growing library of Gedatsu videos of prayer services, sermons and special programs that are available for viewing on YouTube – in both English and Japanese. To access the videos, go to <https://www.youtube.com/c/GedatsuChurchUSA>. Just type or copy the web address in your internet browser or Google "YouTube" and look for "Gedatsu Church." Here are some of the Gedatsu videos you'll find:

#### Events and Ceremonies

- Gedatsu USA Fall Festival 2020
- Gedatsu Kongo's 140<sup>th</sup> Birthday Service
- Archbishop Eizan Kishida Appreciation Service

#### Services

- Monthly "Never Forgotten" Memorial Services for Sacramento and L.A.

#### Sermons by Rev. Naoya Okano

- *Sun Spirit – the True Way to Happiness*
- *Signs of the Time*
- *Holy Tea Ancestor Blessing – Parts I, II and III*
- *The Meaning of Life*
- *Two Sacred Gifts from Our Founder*
- *Shichi-Go-San Festival for Celebration of Children*
- *Ujigami – Guardian Angel of Our Local Community*
- *Konmari, Shintoism and Gedatsu*
- *In the Age of Coronavirus, Repetition is Religion*
- *Finding Our True Vocation in Life*
- *Where Is My Car?*
- *The Spoken Word*

#### Other Presentations

- Livestream Sun Spirit Service from Japan
- Fall Festival 2020 – Remarks by **Bishop T. Okano**
- Heart Sutra prayer by **Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe**
- *Cult of the Sun God* – Musical composition by **Patrick Shiroishi**
- *Lessons on Life through the Study of Water* – Remarks by **Rev. Yasunori Miyasaka**
- *Master Gedatsu Kongo's Quest for World Peace* – **Sr. Deacon Jackson Ito**
- *What Makes a Marriage Last?* **Deacon H. Tsujimura**

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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Sharon Reckers** of the L.A. Gedatsu Church. Sharon and her husband, **Richard**, are parents of two children, **Nicole** and **Richard**. She was raised in Gedatsu by her parents, the late **Paul** and **Harumi Tanji**.

Employed as a registered nurse until she became disabled with a variety of physical ailments, Sharon – through the positive attitude she gained through Gedatsu – views the “negative” events in her life with appreciation, which has deepened her faith in God and her ancestors.

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**Mica Rodriguez**, minister-in-training, adviser

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**Dave Ide, Sr. Deacon Jackson Ito, Sharon Reckers,**

**Rev. Hisakazu Taki, Yoko Yamada**



**Bluebird, from page 1:**  
The symbol of a bluebird as the harbinger of happiness is found in many cultures and dates back thousands of years.

In China, it was seen as immortal, a protector, and a symbol of the sun. Native Americans revered the bluebird. Navajos saw it as a spirit in animal form and the Iroquois believed the bluebird's song would chase away the spirit of winter. In Russian fairy tales, the bluebird represented hope.

## OUR GEDATSU STUDY

### Harmony with Nature

By Archbishop Eizan Kishida

During his lifetime, **Master Gedatsu Kongo** lived without any cooling system and even on unbearably hot summer days, he remarked, “It is splendidly warm today, isn’t it?”

In the dead of winter, Gedatsu Kongo occasionally warmed his hands over the charcoal fire of the only brazier in the room and said, “This cold weather helps wheat in the fields, and trees and shrubs grow well and strong.”

Though his physical body was in a room in a city, his mind was living in harmony with Nature, and he taught his congregation to express a debt of gratitude to Nature.

“By the laws of Nature, in a day are morning, noon and night,” he said. “In a month, there are the beginning, middle and end. And the four seasonal movements are spring, summer, autumn and winter.”

What Gedatsu Kongo said seems ordinary, but it actually has profound meaning in implying the importance of living in harmony with Nature as it exists.

