



# GEDATSU COMPANION

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### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Our purpose in life is to accept our negative karma and use it as an opportunity to improve ourselves."*

Our present existence is the result of our past actions and their connections to everything. This is the principle of karma, which means "action" and is neither negative nor positive.

For example, when we experience difficulties in life, our outlook on life may be dark. We may feel that our negative karma is to blame.

But when we look more deeply into our lives, we realize that our present existence is not possible without parents, ancestors, family, friends, teachers, society, food, water, sunlight, shelter, cars, etc., which contribute positively to our lives.

Our negative karma allows us to become aware of these blessings from everyone and everything in the universe. Appreciation of our karmic past is the key to overcoming difficulties and living with hope.

## MARCH 2023

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	14	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	26	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Higan</i> Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5		No Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	19	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Higan</i> Service
Thu	23	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom

### CHURCHWIDE

Sat	18	10:00 am	Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom
Sat	25	12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom

## APRIL 2023

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	9	9:30 am	<b>Spring Grand Festival</b> <b>Saito Goma Fire Ceremony</b>
Tue	11	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	23	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	9	9:30 am	Spring Grand Festival (Sacramento)
Sun	16	10:00 am	Appreciation Service Easter Service and Easter Egg Hunt
Thu	27	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom

### CHURCHWIDE

Sat	22	12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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### March “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, March 5, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **John Chin, Muneo John Hatae, Rin Ide, Eleanor Ikesaki, Toyota Kino, Richard Shinichiro Kitasoe, Kotsuru Noritake, Sumiko Sebe, Takeo Sekikawa, Kumagoro Takagi, Fred Shigeru Tanaka, Mary Mitsue Tsuboi and Tamimasa Tsuboi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, March 12, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Meiko Arakawa, Vincent Giroux, Ayako Hamamoto, Shikazo Hamaoka, Ernest Hirayama, Naoe Kimura, Lily Yuriko Kuritani, Bill Long, Norma Long, Hisano Miyashita, Tomiko Mizokami, Masao Mori, Chisato Naito, Shigeru Nakamura, Hiroshi Nakatani, Tokumi Nakayama, Antonio Palumbo, Giulia Palumbo, Joe Sanchez, Joseph Sanchez Jr., Sumiko Sebe, Harunaga Shiba, Tom Masami Shiba, Terry Fumio Shiroishi, Shigeru Fred Tanaka, Tokutaro Tsujimura, and Yoshio Wakasa.**

### Board of Directors Elected, Officers Appointed

Members of the Board of Directors of Gedatsu USA were elected in January in general membership meetings at the Los Angeles and Sacramento churches.

Elected to serve for a two-year term through 2025 are: **Mark Ishida**, chairman; **Joyce Reid**, vice-chairman and secretary; **Marie Ishida** and **Allen Shiroishi**, co-treasurers; **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito**, investment director; **Dave Ide**; **Tetsuya Matsumoto**; **Bishop Teruo Okano**; **Allen Shiroishi**; **Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi**; **Deacon June Tanaka**; **Reverend Hisakazu Taki** and **Hisato Tsujimura**. The Board of Directors will meet on March 18 via Zoom.



### Spring Grand Festival

**Sunday, April 9 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento**

Program I – *Gochi* Sanctuary Service

Program II – *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony

- Members and guests are invited to attend.
- Health and safety protocols will be observed.
- **Order your *Saito Goma* plaques by March 20.** Application forms are available at your local church.
- **Reserve a lunch.** A sandwich/chips lunch will be available. Reserve a lunch by contacting your local church. Types of sandwiches will be announced later.
- **Reserve a bus seat.** A free chartered bus from L.A. (minimum of 20 riders) will be provided. Gratuity for bus driver is appreciated. Reserve a seat as soon as possible by contacting **Mariko Locheo** in the L.A. Church office at [locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com](mailto:locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com). The bus is made available through the generosity of **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito**.



### Aztec Dance Troupe to Perform at Spring Festival

The Aztec Dance Troupe of Sacramento has been invited to perform at our Spring Festival on Sunday, April 9. Young men and women trained in dance based on Aztec Indigenous Mexican culture, and dressed in ancient traditional apparel, will perform on the *Goreichi* grounds immediately following the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony.

The performance will highlight the mutual traditions and values that are shared by both the Gedatsu community and Indigenous Mexican cultures: respect for ancestors and appreciation for the Universal Life Force, as well as humankind’s relationship with the natural world, seasonal changes and cultural traditions.

### Applications Due for *Saito Goma* Plaques and *Manbu Kuyo* Certificates

Please submit completed application forms for plaques for the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony and for the *Manbu Kuyo* service in Japan (see below). Applications are due by March 20. Application forms are available at your local church.

### *Manbu Kuyo* Service

Twice a year, as part of the Gedatsu Spring and Fall Grand Festivals in Japan, a memorial rite for spirits is conducted on the *Goreichi* holy grounds. Called *Manbu Kuyo* – literally meaning “ten thousand expressions of respect” – the ceremony is performed to liberate all spirits from suffering and to transform them into protective spirits who benefit the living.

If you would like to apply for a *Manbu Kuyo* certificate, complete and submit the application form. It is recommended that you consult with one of the ministers, who can explain the significance of the service and various categories on the form, as well as guide you on the appropriate *Kuyo* for which you should apply.

Following the *Manbu Kuyo* Ceremony in Japan, applicants will be sent certificates signifying the completion of this sacred prayer. These certificates should be reverently and permanently displayed on your home altar as a family treasure.



### Members Offered Course in Spiritual Advancement, Pathway to Deaconship

Gedatsu members who wish to deepen their spiritual study in Gedatsu, as well as learn how they can become a church deacon, are encouraged to attend a new Spiritual Advancement Course.

The course, which will be led by **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito**, will be launched in the coming weeks. Until then, logistical information – such as dates and times for the course and whether meetings will be in person or remotely via zoom – are being discussed and will be announced soon. Initial gatherings will focus on canvassing members as to the specific activities and interests and what members wish to gain from the course.



“All members are encouraged to attend,” says Deacon Jackson. “The only requirement is that you are a member of the church and have the willingness to learn and advance spiritually.”

If you are interested in attending the course, please contact the church by:

- Email to **Mariko Locheo** at [locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com](mailto:locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com)
- Phone **Mark Ishida**, LA regional board chair, at (626) 328-0092

### Gedatsu Japan to Celebrate 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In October, *Gedatsu-kai* will celebrate its 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at its Fall Grand Festival in Kitamoto, Japan. To accommodate the large number of attendees, the Festival will take place over three days, October 8, 9 and 10. U.S. members are asked to attend on October 8.

If you are interested in participating in the event, please contact **Rev. Naoya Okano** at the L.A. Church at [naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com](mailto:naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com). If there is enough interest, a tour group may be organized.



## AROUND OUR CHURCH

### Sacramento *Goreichi* Grounds Display Nature's Mighty Force

A series of strong "atmospheric rivers" in California, beginning on New Year's Eve and continuing through mid-January, resulted in periods of heavy rainfall, strong winds and widespread flooding throughout the state. Across our *Goreichi* grounds in Sacramento, after decades of hard soil conditions, shallow root systems of dozens of trees were pulled out when the ground became saturated with water.



### Youngest Members Celebrate the New Year



### In the storms' aftermath . . .

Heavy rains flooded the *Goreichi* parking lots, creating lakes of muddy water. Huge pine trees were uprooted in front of and around the Memorial Tower and All Souls Monument. Their massive roots upended the sidewalks, making them impassable.

The Universal Life Force shrine (at left) is barely visible behind one of two huge Eucalyptus trees, which fell in front of and behind the shrine.

Sawing and removal of the trees require a massive clean-up effort that will take months to complete.

### Upstairs, downstairs

When the L.A. Church held its New Year Appreciation Service in January, Reverend Naoya Okano, in the upstairs sanctuary, shared his annual, traditional remarks about the new year in terms of the Eastern astrological calendar. Downstairs, the youngest members had fun creating paper bag rabbit puppets, celebrating the Year of the Rabbit.

### Gedatsu Q&A - Part 33

By Rev. Hisakazu Taki

**Q** *Hate and discrimination are rampant throughout the country and the world. Why do people have such negative feelings, and how can we overcome this horrible world situation?*

**A** I have visited the Manzanar Internment Camp many times. Whenever I visited there, I seriously thought about why people harbor feelings of hate and discrimination against other people and cultures.



**Manzanar Relocation Camp in Inyo County, California, is one of dozens of American concentration camps, where more than 125,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated. About 10,000 men, women and children were housed at Manzanar from March 1942 to November 1945.**

Japanese-American history is only one example of where these negative feelings are evident. All ethnic communities in the U.S. – Blacks, Asians, Latinos, etc. – have suffered discrimination and prejudice to some degree or more. When we observe the entire world, we find discrimination, prejudice, hate, and violence everywhere.

I believe that the root of hate and discrimination against others is the lack of understanding. I know this as a result of my own life experience.

There are times when I simply do not like someone. However, when I learn more about that person's character or background – things of which I was not previously aware – my feelings often change. I may find that my formerly negative impressions dissolve, leaving me with good feelings about that person. My experience teaches me the importance of taking time to understand others.

**When we try to understand other people and other cultures, instead of rejecting them, we feel greater empathy for, and more respectful to, other traditions and people.**

I believe this must be true not only for individuals, but for all nations and cultures, as well. Sometimes, we may feel suspicious about someone or something that is unfamiliar to us. This feeling may create hostility and hatred toward them. When we try to understand other people and other cultures, instead of rejecting them, we feel greater empathy for, and more respectful to, other traditions and people. This must be the foundation toward world peace.

Many of my old American friends experienced the hardships of living in internment camps during WWII. After the war, they didn't speak much about their experiences. I believe that it is important that each of us never forgets this tragic history, because it reminds us to dissolve discrimination and prejudice wherever we find it, especially within ourselves.

**Q** *Jizo and Bato-Kannon deities are enshrined on the grounds of our Los Angeles and Sacramento churches. Please explain the significance of these two statues.*

**A** Jizo and Bato-Kannon are both called "Bodhisattvas," which are kinds of saints, who commit themselves to saving all people.

*(Continued on page 6)*



*(Gedatsu Q&A - continued from page 5)*

### **Jizo**

Jizo is one of the four great bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism, known as “the bodhisattva with the greatest vows.” His two unforgettable vows are: “Only after the Hells are empty will I become a Buddha,” and “Only after all beings are taken across to Enlightenment will I myself realize Bodhi.”

Known as the Earth Store Bodhisattva, Jizo is rooted deeply and continuously in the earth and naturally possesses a number of wonderful qualities. These include compassion and benevolence, supreme optimism, lack of fear, resoluteness, unflagging determination, fully accountable, equanimity, and active engagement in everyday life. These are qualities of the earth, as well as our own innate qualities.



Jizo has vowed to deliver all living beings out of places of suffering. This bodhisattva is called the king of vows because he has promised to work unceasingly until the next Buddha appears in the world to teach. This is the meaning of Jizo Bodhisattva.

### **Bato-Kannon**

The Bato-Kannon bodhisattva is one of many kinds of Kannon, which literally means bodhisattvas who vow to listen to everyone’s cries carefully and try to comfort and console them with compassion. Kanjizai-Bosatsu who is referenced in the *Hannya-shingyo* Heart Sutra that we recite, is another name for this bodhisattva. Therefore, *Hannya-shingyo* is a sutra taught by Kannon.

Bato-Kannon literally means “Kannon bodhisattva with a horse’s head,” and its statues are often depicted with a horse head. This may sound strange, but this description actually represents the virtues of this bodhisattva. Just as a horse devours food with an enormous appetite, Bato-Kannon possesses an intense desire to save all those who are suffering.



There is another reason why this bodhisattva is enshrined at the Gedatsu Church in America. As the United States is a vast land, Americans have reaped the tremendous benefit of horses in developing the land, military and farming since the pioneer days of the West.

Today, instead of horses, we enjoy the benefit of cars. However, despite centuries of technological advances, the term “horsepower” continues to be used in our daily lives, indicating how American lives remain inseparable from horses. Bato-Kannon teaches us to appreciate the blessing from horses.

This is the significance of Jizo and Bato-Kannon that are enshrined outside of our churches. Please understand this and pay your respects to these bodhisattvas whenever you come to church. Please appreciate their daily guidance and protection, and promise them to work for the benefit of other people and world peace. They will surely support you in that effort.



## JANUARY 2023 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$3,386

**General Donations:** J.Tanaka, Anonymous, M/M D. Tsuboi, D. Letoto, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, K. Kitasoe, M. Fukushima, Miyako, N. Hirai, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. Tanaka, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

M/M J. Horner	Appreciation for Fujiko Taketa memorial service
M/M J. Horner	New Year service
M. Sunahara	In memory of Fujiko Taketa
C. Sunahara	In memory of Fujiko Taketa 49-day service (\$500)
M/M D. Ide	Kansha New Year Appreciation Service
M/M D. Ide	New Year 2023 appreciation
J. Tanaka	New Year appreciation
M/M S. Sekikawa	New Year kansha
S. Yabut	"Never Forgotten service appreciation Yukie Ota and Masashi Ota

### **Southern California** Total: \$5,662

**General:** Anonymous, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, E. Ogawa, Chinen Family, Imuta Family, I. Kawamura, J. Ito, J. Kaku, K. Chinen, K. Fujii, K. Kuritani, K. Nakamura, M. Nakamura, M. Okada, M/M A. Shiroishi, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M M. Hamada, M/M N. Okano, M/M P. Young, M/M S. Mukai (\$500), M/M S. Shaklan, M/M T. Hirami, M/M V. Mizokami, N. Takara, S. Kaku, T. Ishida, T. Matsumoto, T. Murakami, T. Okimura, T. Taguchi, T. Yamada, Y. Oishi

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

K. Kuritani	In appreciation for 2022
Anonymous	New Year appreciation
M/M G. Wood	New Year appreciation
J. Mah	New Year appreciation (\$500)
A. Tsujimura	New Year appreciation
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	"Never Forgotten" service appreciation
MM Ho. Tsujimura	Plaques for 2022/2023 appreciation
J. C. Kaku	In memory of Terry Imuta
T. Ishida	January 2023 appreciation
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
T. Okimura	Okimura ancestor blessings

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$427

**General:** S. Matsumoto, S. Shiroishi, M. Springer, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

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

## 2023 UPCOMING EVENTS

### **May**

14 (Sun) Sacramento Mother's Day Service  
21 (Sun) L.A. Mother's Day Service  
28 (Sun) Sacramento plaque burning  
30 (Tue) Churches Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

### **June**

11 (Sun) Sacramento Mother Kiyota Memorial / Father's Day Service  
18 (Sun) L.A. Father's Day Service

### **July**

4 (Tue) Church Closed (Independence Day)  
9 (Sun) Sacramento *Obon* Service  
16 (Sun) L.A. *Obon* Service / Graduates Honored  
24-27 Youth Camp – Sacramento (TBD)

### **August**

4-6 (Fri-Sun) Sacramento Lake Tahoe *Benzaiten* Service (TBD)  
20 (Sun) L.A. *Benzaiten* Service

### **September**

3 (Sun) **Fall Grand Festival 9:30 am**  
5 (Tue) Church Closed (in lieu of Labor Day)  
17 (Sun) L.A. *Higan* Service  
24 (Sun) Sacramento *Higan* Service

### **October**

7-8 (Sat/Sun) LA Autumn Moon Festival (TBD)  
10 (Tue) Church Closed (in lieu of Indigenous Peoples Day)  
15 (Sun) L.A. *Ujigami* Service  
22 (Sun) Sacramento All Souls Service

### **November**

12 (Sun) Sacramento Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Service  
19 (Sun) L.A. 7-5-3 Children's Celebration  
23-24 (Thu-Fri) Church Closed (Thanksgiving)

### **December**

11 (Sun) Sacramento Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service  
17 (Sun) L.A. Holiday Program and Luncheon  
23-31 (Sat-Sun) Church Closed for Holidays

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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Dylan Fujioka** and **Mallory Soto** of the L.A. Gedatsu Church. Dylan, a professional musician, and Mallory, a senior paralegal, were introduced to Gedatsu by **Patrick Shiroishi**, when they were in high school and bonded over their common love for music.

When time permits, the couple performs with Patrick at the L.A. Church services. They like the welcoming environment and sense of community of the church, as well as its message of appreciation and gratitude.

#### Editorial Staff

**Joyce Reid**, Editor

**Rev. Naoya Okano**, adviser

**Rev. Mica Rodriguez**, adviser

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**Dylan Fujioka, John Horner, Dave Ide, Senior Deacon Jackson Ito, Mark Ishida, Mariko Locheo, Delphine Sebe, Joy Sebe, Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi, Mallory Soto, Reverend Hisakazu Taki, Deacon June Tanaka**

In early February in the Sacramento social hall, members showered their dear Sebe *Sensei* with love, affection and warm best wishes for his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

Hosted by his daughters, Delphine and Joy Sebe, the evening party – full of fun, games, song, dance, good food and madcap revelry – was enjoyed by young and old. Heartfelt well wishes were expressed by party participants and remotely via images and videos from members across the U.S. *Sensei's* grandkids offered their own fun, touching tributes to their beloved grandpa.

At right, Reverend Akira Sebe felt the love of party well-wishers. Pictured, from left, Flo Dyson (who flew in from New Jersey), Joy Sebe, Reverend Mica, Reverend Sebe, and Deacon June Tanaka.

#### **A Night of Love and Celebration – Reverend Akira Sebe's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party**

