

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"I teach Gedatsu so people
can learn how to build
sound and happy families."*

Gedatsu is a path for everyone's happiness.

The most basic unit to practice Gedatsu is the family. We try to improve our characters and build a sound home. Through this process of Gedatsu practice, we are going to move toward world peace.

This Gedatsu path is completely different from the path of revolution. We should always start with the basics: self, partners, parents and children, family. We believe this the most reliable path toward world peace.



DECEMBER 2023

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Church Clean-up
Tue	11	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sat-Sun	23-31		Church Closed for Holidays

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	10	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	17	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Holiday Program and Luncheon
Sun-Sat	23-31		Church Closed for Holidays

JANUARY 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mon	1	9:00 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	7	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	9	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	14	10:00 am	First Service of the Year / Gift Exchange
Tue	16		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Sun	28	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Mon	1	7:30 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	7	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	14	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	16		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Thu	18	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	21	10:00 am	New Year Appreciation Service
Sun	28	10:00 am	Ajikan Meditation Practice



December “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, December 3, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Albert Ryoza Akiyama, Soshiro Hatae, Kanzaburo Ide, Kazuo Ide, Dorothy Keiko (Takemura) Nakamoto, Eizan Kishida, Shizuye Kodani, Tomiji Nakayama, Kiichi Ogawa, George Sekikawa, Mariko (Mizumoto) Takemura, Kiyoshi Tateishi, Tokio Tateishi, Tomota Tateishi, and Kimi Yamada.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, December 10, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Yoshio Arakawa, Glen Blaser, Consuelo T. Castillo, Glen Naoya Hiram, Eiko Ishida, Junnosuke Ishida, Natsu Grace Kikuchi, Chizu Kitagawa, Abel Martinez, Helen Akiko Matsumoto, Tatsumi Matsuura, Shizuyo Mizutani, Yoshokazu Nagahama, Jonny Numata, Mitsuko Numata, Kou Helen Sakuma, Glenn Eichi Shimamoto, Dale Smith, Thomas Yasukiyo Sueyoshi, Koji Takahashi, Chisayo Taniguchi, Goro Gary Tanji, Ruby Toshiko Tanji, Shiro Paul Tanji, Tomota Tateishi, Gary Chin Toy, Toru Toyama, and Frank Yoshimichi Yamamoto.**

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.

Have You Renewed Your Church Membership?

Annual Membership: Renewable annually

Individual	\$45
Family	\$70

Lifetime Membership: Pay your membership dues just once, instead of paying annually

Individual	\$450
Family	\$600

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.



**Meet Michelle Ishida,
New Sunday School
Teacher for L.A. Church**

Gedatsu Sunday Schools help our youngest members (pre-teen and younger) build character through simple lessons based on the Gedatsu teaching, as well as fun activities that encourage creativity.

The L.A. Sunday School is taught by **Michelle Ishida**, who works closely with **Reverend Naoya Okano** and **Deacon JoAnn Shiroishi** to develop class activities that relate to the month’s service and/or holiday theme. A graduate of North Carolina Central University, Michelle has worked for the Los Angeles Unified Schools at a charter school in East Los Angeles. She has been teaching middle school for six years. She formerly taught kinder and third grade, as well as Kenpo Karate. Michelle is the daughter of L.A. members, **Mark and Marie Ishida.**

(See back page, which shows Michele instructing Sunday Schoolers how to create fun Halloween crafts.)



Meditation Practices Now Part of Los Angeles Church Monthly Schedule

In these troubled and chaotic times, we may experience a variety of emotions: stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, anger, etc. Having a plan to practice ways of coping with negative, draining emotions is a healthy way to deal with our problems. The regular practice of meditation can help us build emotional resistance and enable us to find calm amidst the chaos.

Gedatsu Church USA teaches two forms of meditation: Holy *Hiho* and *Ajikan* Meditation. The L.A. Church has expanded its monthly services to include both meditation practices, which will be conducted two Sundays a month:

- *Hiho* Meditation on the first Sunday
- *Ajikan* Meditation on the fourth Sunday

Holy *Hiho* Meditation is unique to the Gedatsu Church and is one of the three sacred spiritual practices that Master Gedatsu Kongo left for us to cultivate and improve our spirituality.

Ajikan meditation is a form of Shingon Buddhism meditation that can be practiced in our homes. It strengthens the intellect by unifying body and mind with the Universal Life Force.

The regular practice of both *Hiho* and *Ajikan* meditation helps us deal with the challenges and stresses of everyday life and improves our spirituality. The program for both meditation practices is as follows:

- Opening prayer
- Instructional video on meditation
- Meditation practice
- Ancestor blessing
- Closing prayer

Reverend Naoya Okano of the L.A. Church invites everyone to attend its first and fourth Sunday services. "Come and meditate with us!"



Gedatsu Ukulele Classes to Start in January

Three levels of Gedatsu ukulele classes, instructed by professional musicians **Stan** and **Rocena Tashiro**, will begin in January at the L.A. Church.

🎸 A new Beginning Ukulele class will start on Sunday, January 14, at 9:30 a.m. This class is for anyone in second grade and older who wants to learn how to play the ukulele. Students will learn the basics – from how to hold the ukulele to how to play it.

🎸 Students who have completed Beginning Ukulele will go into the new Ukulele+ class at 10:30 a.m. This class will cover additional strums, more chords and new songs.

🎸 Advanced Ukulele class at 11:45 a.m. is open to anyone who is ready to go beyond the first three frets of the ukulele and proceed to the next level of playing. A discussion with Stan is required prior to joining the class.

For more information, please contact Rocena at (562) 522-5510. Website: sgvukulele.com.



Sign Up for iForce Dojo Classes

iForce Dojo classes teach youth the Japanese mixed-martial arts discipline of Nippon Kenpo, while promoting intellectual growth, discipline, multicultural awareness, community service, and activism. Sign up now for classes, which are held in the Gedatsu Dojo, adjacent to the L.A. Gedatsu Church. Classes are held Mondays and Wednesdays from 6 to 7 p.m.

For more information, contact *Senseis* **Mark** and **Marie Ishida**. Cell (626) 328-0092. Email: markishida1@gmail.com. Website: iforcedojos-gedatsu.org. Facebook: iForcedojos

AROUND OUR CHURCH

Interfaith “Peace Prayer” at Gedatsu Church of Hawaii

The Importance of Overcoming Differences and Working Together

More than 70 religious leaders from various faiths and peace organizations gathered at the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii on October 22 for the annual “Peace Prayer,” sponsored by the Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace (HCRP). Transcending differences in religion, doctrine, and culture, representatives of each religious group stood before the altar and offered a “prayer for peace” according to their own religious traditions, which included Buddhists, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and other faiths.



During the peace ceremony, Jewish and Muslim leaders stood together to offer their mutual prayers for peace.

Reverend Kazuo Yamada, minister of Gedatsu Church of Hawaii, expressed his thoughts: “In today’s tense world, I believe this ceremony made all the participants deeply aware of the importance of overcoming differences anew and working together.”

After the ceremony, participants enjoyed a dinner party on the seaside terrace, socializing well into the evening.

OUR GEDATSU STUDY

A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Translated and Condensed by Rev. H. Taki

Chapter 2: “Great Ambitions”

In 1895, 15-year-old Eizo (Gedatsu Kongo) returned home from his apprenticeship in Tokyo to assist his father, Makitaro, in establishing the Okano family in the textile weaving business.

Makitaro planned to enter the subcontract weaving business, called *Chinbata*, a popular method of textile production in which cotton yarn was purchased from a spinning company, processed and then subcontracted to designated households to weave white cotton cloth. The woven cloth was then collected and sold to a wholesaler.

At first, the business was run only during the farming leisure season, but by the second year, the operation was running full scale. With Eizo’s older brother, Shinzaburo, called up for military service, Eizo was put to work immediately upon his return. His first assignment was the delivery of yarn, then the collection of the finished white cotton cloth. Eizo mastered these business assignments rapidly.

Determination to fulfill the family’s dream

When Eizo’s grandmother Yu died in 1898 at the age of 82, his heartbroken grandfather retired to his bed. Thin with loss of appetite, he called Eizo to his bedside, telling him, “Man’s destiny is determined by how well he handles adversity. Never give up even when you have a hard time, and make every effort. You will then surely be able to profit by success. Don’t forget this.”

(Continued on page 5)

(Biography – continued from page 4)

Grasping his grandfather's hands and nodding deeply, Eizo said with a soft smile, "Thank you for your kindness. You must be tired. Take a good rest." The following day, Eizo's grandfather entered a comatose state and passed away, just two months after his grandmother's passing.

Later that year, Shinzaburo came home after his three years' absence. Makitaro told his sons solemnly, "Listen to my words as your grandfather's will. We will start the weaving business on a full scale." He explained how they would buy a new machine and weave cotton cloth throughout the year, gradually increasing the number of weaving machines until they could build a factory.

So, in the spring of the following year, at the age of 19, Eizo went to the home of an established subcontracting textile business, and Shinzaburo went to a textile factory, where they would each serve their apprenticeships in order to learn the business.



The following spring, Eizo and Shinzaburo returned home and started the weaving business under the name "Okano Weaving Company."

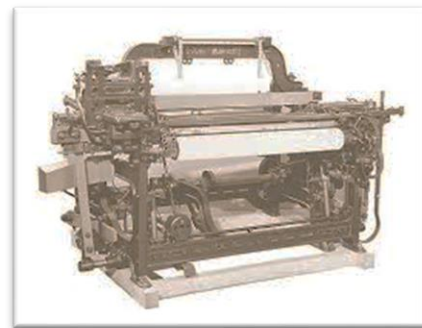
Eizo devoted his efforts to persuading the farmers to do the subcontract weaving throughout the year. However, a civil war in China was causing exports there to cease, resulting in the over-production of cotton yarn. The textile industry fell into a depression as factories reduced operations, and the production of cotton cloth for domestic consumption was reaching a ceiling.

Eizo and Shinzaburo were devastated by the bad news. They decided to continue the weaving factory but reduce the scope of the subcontract weaving business. Eizo kept busy by canvassing prospective weaving subcontractors. In August, he finished making annual contracts with the farmers.

Operating in a volatile, changing industry

In January of 1901, an unprecedented financial crisis became the turning point of the Japanese economy. A new industrial development in the textile industry directly affected Eizo's business.

Home-made power looms were increasing in number, spreading gradually into the weaving industry and reducing the cottage industry of subcontract weaving businesses in various districts. Wholesalers began to organize the subcontractor producers, who theretofore had woven as a side job. The producers under the wholesalers bought power looms and specialized in weaving.



It was impossible for the Okano family to adjust to this new situation at once. After serious considerations, Eizo decided to lower the wage and minimize the profit for the Okano family.

Even with these austere measures, their weaving business finally went into the red. Eizo decided to change his current wholesaler for another. After making inquiries at several wholesalers in Tokyo, he found one who offered an exceptionally good arrangement.

So he changed wholesalers, purchasing all the cotton cloth without condition. He was able to do business much easier. Eizo saw a bright light in the future.

(Continued on page 6)

(Biography – continued from page 5)

At the beginning of March, Eizo went to Tokyo after the settlement of accounts and received payment from the wholesaler by check for the business during the winter. He was very happy.

Business setbacks

However, one week later, a clerk from a fellow weaving business came breathlessly, exclaiming, “The wholesaler whom you deal with went into bankruptcy!” Numb and speechless, Eizo went immediately to Tokyo, and found the wholesaler’s premises closed and vacant. He went to the police. They explained that the wholesaler had been operating in the deficit, and that, just before they passed a bad draft, they sold all the cotton cloth in their inventory and fled into the night with the money.

Discouraged and dispirited, Eizo returned home late at night. He reported everything to Makitaro, and bowed his head, saying, “I am very sorry. I don’t know how to apologize to you.”

Makitaro answered, “What’s done cannot be undone. The important thing is what you should do now.” Eizo could only say, “I understand.” He could not suppress his tears of mortification.

Disappointment and despair

Early next morning, Eizo left home for Tokyo. Arriving at the wholesaler, he put forth his last effort, went down on his knees and asked the wholesaler to postpone the payment. The wholesaler finally understood him, but the manager told him, “Since this happened, there will be no other way than to break off business relations with you.” Eizo was surprised and asked the manager to sell yarn. But the manager said only, “I’ll think about it.”

Later that month, Eizo left home for Okegawa station with the money which Makitaro had given him to buy yarn. At the station, he found the train had already arrived, so he asked a station attendant to check if his goods had arrived. The attendant answered, “There is nothing for you, Mr. Okano.” Eizo was disappointed by his words and was driven to despair.

Eizo then left for Tokyo to buy yarn, but it would be two long months before his family heard from him again.

Desperately seeking success

In Tokyo, Eizo tried to do some business in order to attain some material success, but things did not go as he had expected. Entertaining the last hope for success, he went to Korea and worked as a live-in employee for a cotton cloth store.

At that time, the Japanese Army was confronting the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War. Needing furs and charcoal to withstand the winter in Manchuria, the army ordered one of Eizo’s friends to collect 20,000 furs. The friend asked Eizo to help him – a job offer that got Eizo’s blood pumping.

It was just before the second all-out attack on Port Arthur when Eizo and his friend left for the village that produced furs. Eizo returned to Seoul after they finished collecting furs in the end of the year. The Baltic Fleet was supposed to have reached near the Japan Sea soon, and private ships would not be able to traverse the Japan Sea. If the Japanese Army lost, the Japanese immigrants had to remain in Korea.

Plea from home

Eizo received a letter from Makitaro, urging Eizo to return home before the battle of the Japan Sea began. Eizo shared the letter with his friend, who said, “You should go home. You have family waiting for you.” Eizo thanked him and nodded deeply.

So, in March of 1905, after receiving half of the profit from the fur business from his business partner, Eizo thanked the man for everything, and said farewell.

At the age of 25, Eizo left Korea to return home to Japan.

(Next month: “The Darkness of Despair”)



OCTOBER 2023 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,745

General Donations: J. Tanaka, A. Sebe, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M. Lumpkin, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. Taketa

Special Acknowledgments

M. Macias	Appreciation for space
M/M C. Tanaka	Appreciation Sept/Oct "Never Forgotten"
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation Sept/Oct "Never Forgotten"
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation Sept/Oct "Never Forgotten"
M/M S. Sekikawa	<i>Kansha</i> for Appreciation Service
M/M S. Sekikawa	<i>Kansha</i> for September <i>Higan</i> Service
K. Gibson	Thank you for many blessings in this world to make it better
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for All Souls and Appreciation Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for All Souls and Appreciation Service
M/M S. Sekikawa	<i>Kansha</i> to All Souls

Southern California Total: \$3,081

General: A. Tsujimura, Anonymous (2), C. Uchida, D. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, J. Ito, J. Kaku, J. Okazaki, K. Fujii, K. Kuritani, M. Nakamura, M/M D. Mah, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M K. Chinen, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M M. Garcia-Locheo, M/M N. Chodor, M/M S. Mukai, M/M S. Shaklan, M/M T. Fukushima, M/M T. Hiram, M/M V. Mizokami, N. Takara, No Name, P. Muronaka, R. Wakasa, T. Murakami, T. Okimura, Y. Oishi.

Special Acknowledgments

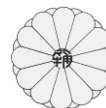
J. Shiroishi	Memorial service for Mariko-Marie Tsaruta and Toki Shiroishi
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
T. Okimura	Special offering for Mariko Michiuye
T. Matsumoto	Special offering for Hiroshi Nakaguchi and Shizuya Nakaguchi
T. Ishida	Appreciation for visit and return from Japan

Online Donations: Total: \$857

General: G. Iwata, F. Dyson-Palumbo (\$500), S. Shiroishi, A. Nakata, H. Tsujimura, M/M P. Reid, G. Hass

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

Appreciation Fund



Become a Donor to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

Gedatsu Church USA is supported through membership fees and donations of members and friends. These dollars help to ensure the day-to-day operations of our church.

Many years ago, the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund, or *Hosankai*, was established to allow members to demonstrate a higher level of commitment, appreciation and support for the church. These funds provide sustaining dollars that help us achieve our longer-range plans for growth and development.

Participation in the Fund requires an annual 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.

If you would like to be a donor to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund, complete and submit the application form that is available at your local church office.

Donations to the Fund are tax deductible. A list of donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund is published annually in the *Gedatsu Companion*.

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
www.gedatsu-usa.org



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The *Gedatsu Companion* is published monthly for members like **Joy Sebe**. Joy is the daughter of **Reverend Akira Sebe** and **Sumiko Sebe**. She lives in Seattle with her husband, **Jason**, and their sons, **Nathan** and **Noah**.

“The kindness and love of my family and the Gedatsu community have given me strength and confidence to be myself, wherever I am,” says Joy. “I feel grounded and energized when I return home to Sacramento and connect with members and their families.”

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Halloween Fun at L.A. Church



Special holiday-themed Sunday School projects and fun activities, like the Halloween costume and treat parade in October, are part of the monthly Appreciation Service programs at the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church. Sunday School instructor, Michelle Ishida, (left photo) demonstrates how to create the treat bags. Sunday Schoolers show off their costumes and goodies (right photo).