

# GEDATSU COMPANION

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 News and Announcements
- 3 Sun Spirit Services
- 4 "Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo" – "The Beginning"
- 7 February Offerings
- 8 "Pathways to Happiness" by Senior Reverend Akira Sebe

### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Stay foolish!*

*Spring comes limitlessly only  
to the gateway of foolishness."*

The egoist's "smart" way of life, which always calculates to benefit oneself, is full of greed and continual suffering.

Gedatsu Kongo taught "Practice Ignorance" as a key to true happiness.

True beauty and abundance are expressed in a humble life in which we learn from everything, feel grateful to be allowed to live each day, work diligently, and create harmony with the people around us.

## APRIL 2024

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

|     |    |          |   |
|-----|----|----------|---|
| Sun | 7  | 10:00 am | "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service                |
| Tue | 9  | 7:00 pm  | Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet            |
| Sun | 14 | 9:30 am  | Spring Grand Festival<br>Saito Goma Fire Ceremony |
| Sun | 28 |          | No Service  |

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

|     |    |          |                                    |
|-----|----|----------|------------------------------------|
| Sun | 7  | 10:00 am | "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service |
| Sun | 14 | 9:30 am  | Spring Grand Festival (Sacramento) |
| Thu | 18 | 5:00 pm  | Regional Board Meeting via Zoom    |
| Sun | 21 | 10:00 am | Appreciation Service               |
| Sun | 28 | 10:00 am | Ajikan Meditation Practice         |

## MAY 2024

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

|     |    |          |   |
|-----|----|----------|---|
| Sun | 5  | 10:00 am | "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service                                |
| Sun | 12 | 10:00 am | Appreciation and Mother's Day Service                             |
| Tue | 14 | 7:00 pm  | Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet                            |
| Sun | 26 | 10:00 am | Appreciation Service /<br>Old Plaque Burning Service (Joan-no-gi) |
| Tue | 28 |          | Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)                           |

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

|     |    |          |   |
|-----|----|----------|---|
| Sun | 5  | 10:00 am | Hiho Meditation Practice                |
| Sun | 12 | 10:00 am | "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service      |
| Sun | 19 | 10:00 am | Appreciation and Mother's Day Service   |
| Thu | 23 | 5:00 pm  | Regional Board Meeting via Zoom         |
| Sun | 26 | 10:00 am | Ajikan Meditation Practice              |
| Tue | 28 |          | Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day) |



### April “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, April 7, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Natsuko Nakatani, Masashi Russell Ota, Arthur Sakamoto, Susumu Suyeyasu, Chiyoko Suzuki, Thomas Taro Takashashi, Keichi Tekemura, Katherine Kazue Tanaka, Henry Toshio Tateishi, Keiji Tsuboi, Sally Yukiko Tsuboi, and Tsutomu Ben Tsuboi.**

The Los Angeles Church will also hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, April 7, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Matsuichi Azama, 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, Larry Katsuichi Nakamura, Yoshinobu Nakamura, Osamu Naruko, Harry Odama, Otomatsu Odama, Tomoyo Ogura, Akiko Okazaki, Emiko Okimura, Laly Padilla, Helen Shiroishi, Hidemi Pat Shiroishi, Dayna Slotnik, Tsutako Sherrie Takimoto, Bobby Kiyoshi Tanji, Shigeno Tomita, Henry Tsujimura, Joseph Harold Wessman, Jr., Dr. Tsuyoshi Yamashita, and Enes S. Sarvello Zeto.**

### Memorial Tower Enshrinements – Fall 2024

Enshrinements in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower are scheduled for the Fall Grand Festival in September in Sacramento. Applications for enshrinement will be accepted until June 15. Application forms are available at your church office.



### Spring Grand Festival

**Sunday, April 14 – 9:30 a.m.**

**Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento**

Program I – *Gochi* Sanctuary Service

Program II – *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony

- Members and the public are invited to attend.
- Sermon by guest speaker from *Gedatsu-kai* Japan: **Reverend Yasunori Miyasaka**, director of propagation.
- **Reserve a lunch.** A free lunch will be available: *Bahn Mi* Vietnamese sandwiches (vegetarian, teriyaki chicken, or BBQ pork), chips, and water. Reserve a lunch by contacting your local church.
- **Reserve a bus seat.** A free chartered bus from L.A. (minimum of 15 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.**

### Old Plaque-burning Service

The Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento will hold its annual *Joen-no-gi* Old Plaque-burning Service on the *Goreichi* grounds on Sunday, May 26.

With prayers of invocation by the ministers, as well as holy tea blessing and prayers offered by the congregation, old holy tea plaques and holy paper plaques that were returned to the church will be lit on fire to return the sacred items to their natural elements and to the universe.

### Members Celebrate the Spirit of the Sun



The 84-year-old Sun Spirit Service tradition that **Master Gedatsu Kongo** established in Japan was observed by Gedatsu congregations in Sacramento and Los Angeles at their annual Sun Spirit services in February. Bowing in prayers of appreciation, with images of the Sun Spirit Monument before them, members celebrated the sun and its qualities of selflessness, fairness, and endless compassion.



Gedatsu Kongo erected the Sun Spirit Monument to acknowledge the spiritual qualities of universal love, acceptance, and compassion symbolized by the sun.



L.A. Sunday Schoolers celebrate the Sun Spirit with a fun project: creating decorative Japanese fans with images of the sun. At left, Greg Wood assists Sunday School teacher, Michelle Ishida, as students proudly display their hand-made creations.



The L.A. Church message screen announces the musical presentation for the Sunday program. Professional musicians, (from left) Patrick Shiroishi, Amber Navran Shiroishi, Dylan Fujioka, and Mallory Soto delight the congregation with their tuneful performance.



## Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

### Chapter 5 The Beginning

In 1928, once he had made up his mind to establish the Gedatsu teaching, Eizo Okano (Gedatsu Kongo) had a divine revelation that the Supreme God of the Universe would be manifested in the world.

Also, in a mysterious dream, Eizo had another revelation concerning the *Hokyojin-to* stone stupa, which was erected on the Tamonji Temple grounds of his hometown, Kitamotojuku. In his dream, a loud voice told him to withdraw the *Dharani*, which was contained within the stupa, and save people throughout the world. *Dharani* is a mantra, or mystic utterance. Villagers believed that, when they prayed before the stupa, their sins and sufferings would be removed.



Eizo did not fully understand the meaning of his dream, but he believed its source was divine, so he was resolved to obey without question.

Thus, on November 1929, after receiving the permission of the Temple and in the presence of a huge crowd, the stupa was opened, and the *Dharani* scroll was removed. Rev. Kensho Shimada was asked to witness the scene, because the psychic was well-known and trusted.

## The Holy Goho is revealed

Even after two hundred years, the paper scroll was only slightly damaged, and the characters written in ink were still clear. Because he had to return the original scroll, Eizo copied the *Dharani* every day. One day, he had a mysterious experience. He suddenly and automatically started to write the Holy *Goho*, the spiritualistic Sanskrit characters representing the five aspects of the Universal Life. At the time, however, Eizo, did not know what he was writing.

When he became aware of the mysterious functions of the Holy *Goho*, Eizo called his younger brother to his home. Eizo showed him what he had written, saying, "This is the Holy *Goho* that I was allowed to write by the Divine Will. There are many things I still don't understand, so I need your help to perform the spiritual practice (which was later called the *Goho* practice) to help me understand."

One day, Eizo and Shimada set out on a spiritual investigation of the land of Kitamotojuku. As they walked through a thicket of small bamboos, they reached a solitary pine tree with a small shrine called *Atago-sama* at its base. Shimada suddenly was overtaken in a violent, possessed state. After Eizo and others were finally able to restrain him, they took him to the Okano home. Upon regaining consciousness, Shimada said, "I'm sure that a strong spiritual power exists around the solitary pine tree." In later years, this place came to be called *Goreichi* or the Spiritual Ground.



**Goreichi in its earliest years**

(Continued on page 5)

### *(Biography – Continued from page 4)*

From that time, many people began to visit Eizo to learn from him. Eizo had them perform the *Goho* practice and *Amacha Kuyo*, which he had also discovered. He gained a growing reputation for possessing a remarkable psychic power. Several of his followers began to hold meetings in their homes and invited Eizo to teach. This was the beginning of the Gedatsu branches in the early days.

Around that time, Eizo's relationship with Aki deteriorated. Active in her geisha house business, she could not understand Eizo's interest in the religious world. So, in mid-1930, he divided his property with Aki and severed their relationship.

#### President Okano leads *Gedatsu-kai*

In December 1930, Eizo gathered a number of his devoted followers to discuss what they should name their study group. They decided on *Gedatsu-kai*, or Gedatsu Church. Eizo came to be called *Kaicho-Sensei*, or President Teacher, and the newly formed Gedatsu Church was composed of a small group of twenty-some members. (Hereafter, Eizo will be referred to as "President Okano.")

Many people began to visit President Okano to learn and benefit from his guidance. He did not apply fixed principles to everyone. Rather, he guided each person in a way that best suited him or her. The *Goho* study was greatly helpful for that purpose. This was his basic attitude of teaching.

In April, he was ordained as a Buddhist priest at the Daigo-ji Buddhist Temple in Kyoto and was given the Buddhist name Seiken. Thus, he was officially qualified to perform religious activities.

#### The Grand Festivals begin

On May 8 of 1931, President Okano held the Spring Festival for the first time on the *Goreichi* grounds. The festival was performed with a focus on visiting the *Hokyo-in-to* Stupa. His brother, Shinzaburo, and other villagers prepared for the festival. More than 100 people from Tokyo participated.

One day, President Okano was kidnapped by gunpoint by a group of right-wing extremists at Ueno Station. They took him to a secluded area and confronted him, saying, "You are preaching a dubious religion and deceiving people. Your heretical religion harms the country. Before we kill you as divine punishment for your wrongdoings, do you have any last words?"

President Okano replied, "I've devoted myself to working for the good of the country. If you think I am wrong, you may kill me. But, please deliver my body to my good friend, Shinkichi Kobayashi."

These words made the men restless. They said, "If you are a good friend of Mr. Kobayashi, you must be speaking the truth. We were deceived. Please forgive us." They then quickly fled.

Kobayashi and President Okano were indeed good friends since childhood. Kobayashi was a known as a broad-minded, patriotic man, who was respected by the so-called right wing.

#### Detained by police

Two months after this incident, when President Okano was teaching at a member's home, police officers raided the home and arrested him together with other members. They were detained in the Nakano Police Station. They were arrested because some people were displeased with the Gedatsu Church's rapid development.

President Okano was thoroughly interrogated and released after 29 days. After only a few days' rest, however, he invited the president of the Police Journal to his residence. President Okano thanked him for his support, and then asked him, "Could you please gather as many police station chiefs as possible? I want to thank them for my good experiences at the police. I'll bear all the expenses for the reception."

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Biography – Continued from page 7)*

### A gesture of goodwill

The police station chiefs were amazed at the reception that President Okano threw for them. They were treated to all sorts of delicacies and high-quality sake and entertained by geisha. The president of the Police Journal addressed the group, thanking President Okano and introducing him as “the owner of this restaurant Akizuki.” They were all surprised.

### A fateful encounter

In those days, it was usual for President Okano to visit various gatherings every day to teach members until midnight. Members gradually increased in number, and the meeting places were gaining reputation.

One day, Takeo Kishida, the owner of a printing company, visited a meeting place through the introduction of his fellow businessman. After President Okano spoke briefly, they started the *Goho* practice, which Kishida observed. He had no idea what was going on, but he was strongly impressed.

President Okano then spoke. “Thank you very much for coming today,” he said. “I was in custody for a month and interrogated about my religious activities. Through this experience, I sincerely convinced myself that I should bolster my spirits and take the right path in religious activities. At the same time, I felt respect for the police, who have tried to keep us on the right path. My one goal since I started these religious activities is to strive to awaken the national spirit. I am prepared to risk my whole life to attain this goal from now on.”

His words impressed the audience. It was as if all the police station chiefs wished President Okano good luck.

On Kishida’s third visit at the meetings, President Okano told him to perform the *Goho* practice. Kishida received the Holy *Goho* and closed his eyes. He then saw a golden flash sparkling like a firework and the *kanji* characters of *Shimizukubo-Benzaiten*. He opened his eyes in surprise.

When Kishida described what he had seen, President Okano explained, “That is your family’s guardian angel.”

The next morning, when Kishida asked his mother about this, she replied, “It must be the *Benzaiten* of the paddy field on the hill.

When Kishida went there, he found a fountain gushing pure water in a thicket of trees. There was a small shrine. When he opened the shrine, he found a divine plaque on which the *kanji* characters of *Shimizukubo-Benzaiten* were written – exactly as he had envisioned in his *Goho* practice. Through this experience, Kishida strongly felt the mystery of the invisible world. From then on, he became eager to study Gedatsu. In later years, Kishida would found the Gedatsu Church in America.

### Living by example

The manner in which President Okano lived his daily life served as an important study for members. He would tell his members:

*“The first step of appreciation is to thank God for giving us precious life today each day.”*

*“As long as man is fed, clothed and housed, he should be absolutely grateful.”*

*“Not even a single day of the year can be relived. Therefore, don’t waste a single moment.”*

*“Tomorrow has tomorrow’s business. Complete today what should be done today.”*

*“Man should make every effort to accomplish his duty. When you constantly endeavor, you will never be in trouble.”*

This is what President Okano always said. This is how he lived.

*(Next month: House Number 6)*



## FEBRUARY 2024 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$8,840

General Donations: J. Tanaka, M/M A. Akashi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, K. Ota Schubert, M. Fukushima, M. Rodriguez, M./J. Tanaka, M. Lumpkin, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa, S. Yabut

#### Special Acknowledgments:

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| J. Ito          | <i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$6,000)                             |
| D. Takahashi    | Hiroko Takahashi service appreciation (\$500)                          |
| A. Sebe         | Appreciation   |
| M/M C. Tanaka   | Appreciation and gratitude   |
| M/M D. Tsuboi   | With gratitude monthly donation  |
| M/M S. Sekikawa | Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service                             |
| M/M D. Tsuboi   | Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service                             |
| J. Tanaka       | "Never Forgotten" service for<br>Karl Kaoru Tanaka and Noburo Tateishi |
| M/M S. Sekikawa | Appreciation for Sun Spirit service                                    |
| M/M D. Tsuboi   | Appreciation for Sun Spirit service                                    |
| M/M D. Tsuboi   | Gratitude for Appreciation Service                                     |
| M/M D. Ide      | Appreciation for fourth Sunday service                                 |

### **Southern California** Total: \$5,570

General: M. Chinen, K. Fujii, M/M T. Hiram, T. Ishida, J. Ito, J. Kaku, I. Kawamura, K. Kuritani, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M D. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, P. Muronaka, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M S. Shaskan, M/M A. Shiroishi, D. Shiroishi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood, M/M P. Young

#### Special Acknowledgments:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| T. Murakami           | Appreciation for ancestor blessing             |
| Yoneyama Family       | In memory of Florence Sueyoshi                 |
| S. Kaku               | "Never Forgotten" for Morio Kaku               |
| K. Chinen             | Memorial service for Kofuku and Fumiko Makishi |
| J. Ito                | In memory of Nancy M. Ito                      |
| T. Ishida             | Memorial service for Tadayoshi Ishida          |
| Do. Shiroishi         | In memory of Tadayoshi Ishida                  |
| Kaku/Mahoney Families | In memory of Morio Kaku                        |
| D. Mukai              | "Never Forgotten" service for Karl Tanaka      |
| D. Mukai              | Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo    |
| D. Mukai              | Appreciation for new car blessing              |

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$429

General: G. Iwata, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, M/M P. Reid, D. Allum, G. Hass

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

## 2024 UPCOMING EVENTS

### June

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

### July

4 (Thu) Church Closed  
(Independence Day)  
14 (Sun) Sacramento *Obon* Service  
21 (Sun) L.A. *Obon* Service /  
Graduates Honored

### August

2-4 (Fri-Sun) Sacramento Lake Tahoe  
*Benzaiten* Service (TBD)  
18 (Sun) L.A. *Benzaiten* Service

### September

1 (Sun) **Fall Grand Festival and  
75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration**  
3 (Tue) Church Closed  
(in lieu of Labor Day)  
15 (Sun) L.A. *Higan* Service  
22 (Sun) Sacramento *Higan* Service

### October

15 (Tue) Church Closed (in lieu of  
Indigenous Peoples Day)  
20 (Sun) L.A. *Ujigami* Service  
27 (Sun) Sacramento All Souls Service

### November

10 (Sun) Sac'to Gedatsu Kongo Service  
17 (Sun) L.A. Gedatsu Kongo Service /  
7-5-3- Children's Celebration  
24 (Sun) Sac'to Gedatsu Kongo Birthday /  
7-5-3- Children's Celebration  
28-29 (Thu-Fri) Churches Closed  
Thanksgiving Holiday

### December

8 (Sun) Archbishop Kishida Memorial  
15 (Sun) L.A. Archbishop Kishida Memorial  
Service / Holiday Program  
24-31 (Tue-Tue) Church Closed

GEDATSU CHURCH USA  
www.gedatsu-usa.org



Editorial Staff

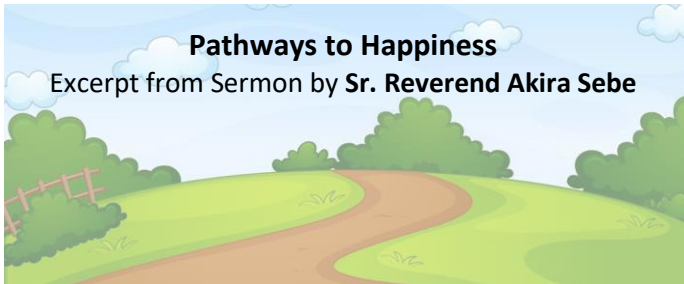
**Joyce Reid**, Editor

**Reverend Naoya Okano**, adviser

**Reverend Mica Rodriguez**, adviser

Editorial contributors to this issue:

**Dave Ide, Marie Ishida, Mark Ishida, Mariko Locheo,**  
**Senior Reverend Akira Sebe, Reverend Hisakazu Taki**



There are two main pathways to achieve happiness through the study of Gedatsu. I learned this from Bishop Kishida, a direct disciple of Gedatsu Kongo, but it was only through my personal experiences that I came to understand the true meaning of this teaching. The realization came gradually, over my lifetime. It took many years of practicing appreciation and gratitude, many experiences, and a desire to achieve greater self-awareness and acceptance of myself.

The first way to achieve happiness is to work for the happiness of others. This means to offer yourself unselfishly without thought of personal gain, of expecting anything in return.

Gedatsu Church USA  
Los Angeles Branch  
7850 Hill Drive  
Rosemead, CA 91770

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
ONTARIO, CA  
PERMIT NO. 574

I asked Bishop Kishida, “How do I develop my soul?” He replied, “Through *houshi*,” which means doing volunteer work. When you volunteer, you feel happy within yourself. You are giving your time and energy, of yourself, without expecting anything back in return. Your actions mirror the unseen movement of the Universal Life Force, which continually gives without expectation. In giving, you feel satisfied and content.

The second way to achieve greater happiness and peace of mind is through what I call “upgrading” or developing your soul.

This requires you to deepen your appreciation for all your blessings by being thankful every day. Feeling gratitude, in your heart, not with your intellect or mind, is key to developing your soul. If you have conflicts in your mind, such as worries, complaints, or anger, you cannot feel gratitude. Your negative thoughts block you from feeling gratitude, from experiencing the Universal Life Force’s flow of abundant, unconditional love. You have to practice through your everyday life experiences to grow more appreciation in your heart.