

# GEDATSU COMPANION

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Reverend Yasunori Miyasaka
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Note: The series, "Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo," will resume in the June issue of the *Gedatsu Companion*.

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### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Daily reflection is a means to true happiness and the foundation for spiritual enlightenment."*

What do we do if we catch a cold?  
What do we do if we fail an exam?

We may rest and study for the next exam. At the same time, however, it is also important to ask ourselves why we caught a cold and what made us fail the exam. Reflecting on the causes will prevent us from repeatedly finding ourselves in the same situation.

When we reflect on things that happen to us during the day, we learn from them and gain knowledge for tomorrow. In this way, we earnestly devote ourselves to our vocation and treat everyone and everything around us with understanding and acceptance.

By living in such a way, we find the path to enlightenment.

## 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 / Old Plaque Burning Service ( <i>Joen-no-gi</i> )
Tue	28		Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	5	10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> 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	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice
Tue	28		Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

## JUNE 2024

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	9	10:00 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service Mother Kiyota Memorial Service
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	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	9	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	16	10:00 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service Mother Kiyota Memorial Service
Thu	20	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	23	10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice



### May “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.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 5, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Hyozauro Hirose, Ben Tsutomu Ide, Buster Yoshiharu Ide, Raymond Kaname Nakamoto, Akino Ogawa, Betty Ozaki, Larizlalo Rodriguez, Ramona Rodriguez, Isami Suzuki, Kenneth Taketa, Masao Taketa, and Shigeno Tateishi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, May 12, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Satsuki Akiyoshi, Keiji Ariyasu, Marilyn S. Ariyasu, Gorokichi Aso, Tsugu Endo, Andrué Gutierrez, Wesley Hiram, John Kuritani, Chih-ming Lai, Sumako Matsumoto, Tamotsu Matsuura, Kikuye Miyamura, Nobuichi Miyashita, June Junko Morioka, Tameharu Nagao, Hitomi Nakaguchi, Ronald Yoshio Nakamura, Shigemi Nakamura, Shizuyo Nakamura, Sumiko Nakamura, Teruko Nakamura, Seiko Notoya, Mitsuji Okada, Joyce Okimura, Miyoko Okimura, Adeline Sanchez, David Harry Schonbach, Rev. Jerry Shiroishi, Hiroko Takahashi, Joe Mitsuhide Takara, Kiyo Tanji, Yozo Tsujimura, Jane Harue Wakasa, and Hiroshi Yamamisaka**

### Future Spiritual Leader Installed



**Takayuki Okano** was installed as *Yotsugi*, the successor to the Abbot (*Hoshu*) of the Gedatsu Church, in formal inauguration ceremonies on March 13 at *Gedatsu-kai Goreichi* in Japan (photo below.)

As the future Abbot, Takayuki Okano is in line to be the spiritual leader of the Gedatsu Church. He succeeds the current *Hoshu*, **Abbot Hideaki Okano**. Yotsugi Takayuki Okano is the third son of the former *Hoshu*, **Abbot Seiho Okano**, who passed away in 2019, and a descendant of **Founder Gedatsu Kongo**.



American members will remember Takayuki Okano from his visits to the U.S., including a two-week visit to Sacramento, Los Angeles, and Honolulu as Exchange Ambassador in the summer of 2017.

### Board of Directors Meets to Set Church Policy and Direction

The Board of Directors, the primary decision-making body of Gedatsu Church USA, held its annual meeting in March via video conference (screenshot below). Working closely with the ministers, the Board sets the overall direction for the church, provides financial oversight and management, and establishes policies to ensure the long-term growth and stability of the church.



Led by **Mark Ishida**, Board chair, the directors discussed a range of topics and issues – from operational expenses, stock investments, and facility improvements to planning for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**Directors pictured, left to right from top:** Mark Ishida, Marie Ishida, Jo Ann Shiroishi, Joyce Reid, Dave Ide, Allen Shiroishi, Jackson Ito, Hisato Tsujimura, June Tanaka, Tetsuya Matsumoto. **Ministers:** Rev. Mica Rodriguez, Rev. Naoya Okano, Sr. Rev. Akira Sebe. **Staff:** Mariko Locheo. **Directors not in attendance:** Bishop Teruo Okano and Rev. Hisakazu Taki.

(Continued on page 3)

*(Board of Directors -- continued from page 2)*

### Financial Impact of Steadily Rising Costs

The directors' major focus at this year's Board meeting was the financial health and stability of Gedatsu Church USA. Steadily rising costs for outside services, materials, and labor are strongly impacting the church's limited financial resources and impeding its ability to grow and move key programs forward.

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*"Just as inflationary prices in the marketplace negatively affect our pocketbooks as consumers, our church is dealing with higher costs each year in practically all areas of business activity."*

Mark Ishida, Board Chair

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"Just as inflationary prices in the marketplace negatively affect our pocketbooks as consumers, our church is dealing with higher costs each year in practically all areas of business activity," says Mark.

"Take insurance, for example. Anyone attending our churches and/or using our facilities – members, non-members, and visitors alike – requires liability insurance coverage by the church. Those kinds of costs are soaring, and membership dues, donations, stock investments, and other sources of income simply can't keep pace."

### Need to Raise Prices

The Gedatsu Church historically has tried to keep its prices low for its members. However, as a practical necessity, it can no longer do so. Therefore, the Gedatsu Church will be raising prices on certain items and offerings.

- Plaques for Saito Goma Fire Ceremony  
Members have paid \$2.50 per plaque for more than 20 years, despite ever-rising costs for the wood and production processes that are required to make the plaques. To cover these higher costs, the price for plaques will increase to \$5 per plaque, effective immediately for the Fall Festival.

- Enshrinement Plaques for Memorial Tower  
Memorial Tower plaques are sacred objects that forever identify the spiritual entities, who have been enshrined in the tower. Each plaque is manufactured, engraved, and consecrated with the Holy *Goho* symbol. Once enshrined, the souls are remembered and cared for forever, receiving monthly prayers from the *Goreichi* ministers.

The current \$300 price for Memorial Tower plaques barely covers the costs of the materials and fabrication processes that are required to make them. Effective immediately beginning with the Fall Festival, the price for plaques will increase to \$500.

- Membership Dues  
Gedatsu Church membership dues have not increased in 10 years, despite higher costs during that time in virtually every area of our lives. Beginning in 2025, to keep pace with the cost of living, annual membership dues will increase as follows:
  - \$60 for individuals, including each child age 30+ living at home (currently \$45)
  - \$100 for families (currently \$70)
  - \$600 for lifetime individuals (currently \$450)
  - \$1,000 for lifetime families (currently \$600)

### Planning for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration

The Board discussed plans for the celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Fall Grand Festival on Sunday, September 1, at the Sacramento Spiritual Center. A festive catered Mexican luncheon, featuring *birria* grilled tacos, and other tasty foods and beverages is one of the celebration activities being planned. (See back page.) While a tour group from Japan will not be attending this year, we do expect some special guests from *Gedatsu-kai* to join us. Make plans now to attend with family and friends. Watch for more information in the coming months.

### Members Are Priority

Mark concluded the Board of Directors meeting by stressing the importance of members. "Meeting the needs of our members is a priority of our Board," said Mark. "At the same time, strong and active member support of our church – in terms of funding, engagement, and community-building – remains a critical factor in the ability of our Gedatsu Church to move forward and grow."



## Members, Friends Celebrate 149<sup>th</sup> Spring Grand Festival

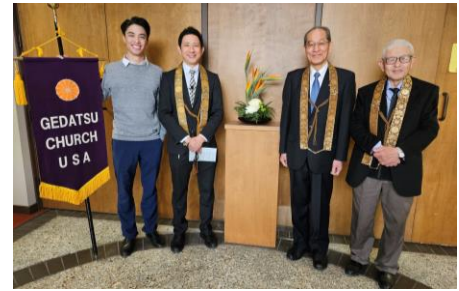
After a full day of rain, Sunday morning, April 14, dawned cool and dry, as Gedatsu members and friends gathered at the Sacramento Spiritual Center to celebrate the 149<sup>th</sup> Spring Grand Festival and express their appreciation and gratitude to the Supreme Spirit of the Universe, guardian angels, and all souls.

The Festival began in the *Gochi* Sanctuary, where congregants were greeted – in English and Japanese – by **Everett McSwain**, chairperson for Program I. He introduced the ministers and welcomed guest speaker, **Reverend Yasunori Miyasaka**, director of propagation, from *Gedatsu-kai* Japan. The congregation joined in giving prayers for All Souls as flowers and *Amacha* holy tea were offered.

Program II was the *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony, chaired by **Pauline Tomita** and performed by the officiant, **Senior Reverend Akira Sebe**, who invoked the power of the *Fudo* guardian to ask for the deity's guidance and wisdom, and to offer thanks for allowing the ceremony to be held. The officiant harnessed the power of *Fudo* to fulfill the prayers and supplications inscribed on wooden plaques that congregants offered to the fire. Special prayer plaques included "World Peace," "Spirit of American Pioneer Forefathers," and "Peaceful Resolution of the Ukrainian and Gaza Conflicts."

The Spring Festival concluded as it had commenced, with sincere expressions of appreciation, prayers for world peace, and joyful celebrations of friendship.

### IMAGES OF THE FESTIVAL DAY



Sanctuary photos, top row, left to right: Andrew Shaklan, Rev. Okano, Rev. Miyasaka, and Sr. Rev. Sebe. Middle row, left to right: Chairperson, Everett McSwain; Rev. Miyasaka; Dave Ide; *Ochigo* Ryunosuke and Nanami Okano. Bottom row, left to right: Flower bearers, Courtney Ide, Ryann Young, Kari Kuritani, Vivian McSwain, Brianna Prescott, and Gwen Ramey; *Amacha* bearers, Cindy Tsujimura, Wendy Young, Yoko Oishi, Toyoko Murakami, Diana Mukai, and Pam Shaklan.



Fire Ceremony photos, top row, left to right: Rev. Miyasaka, reading invocation; Sr. Rev. Sebe, invoking the power of *Fudo*. Bottom row, left to right: Chairperson, Pauline Tomita; fire attendants, Carson Kuritani, Everett McSwain, Tyler Young, and Andrew Shaklan; Rev. Okano and Rev. Rodriguez.

### Activate the Gedatsu Teaching to Create Order and Harmony in a Chaotic World

Address by **Reverend Yasunori Miyasaka**  
Director of Propagation, *Gedatsu-kai* Japan  
Spring Grand Festival – April 14, 2024



Hello, everyone. Congratulations on your Spring Grand Festival. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to Chairman Ishida, the Board of Directors, and all members for your continued dedication and commitment to the Church.

In Japan, as you all know, the year 2024 started in a very unexpected way with a powerful earthquake that struck Ishikawa Prefecture's Noto Peninsula on New Year's Day. This earthquake hit Japan just when we were gearing up to navigate the post-pandemic era. It made me realize that we still live in a dangerous and uncertain world.

When we look at what is happening in the world, we realize that so many people living on the same planet as we do are suffering from the horrors of war, such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza. Also, devastating natural disasters, like earthquakes, storms, floods, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, and forest fires, are occurring in many parts of the world. We should never think of them as someone else's problems and turn a blind eye to them.

It looks as though tough times last forever, and we face never-ending difficulties. However, let me introduce you to Master Gedatsu Kongo's first written message of the New Year in 1941, the year in which the Second World War began.

He wrote, "Today is the beginning of the world." He meant that "the beginning" is not something in ancient times. Rather, it is right in front of us, unfolding in the form of challenges we face today.

From his 1941 New Year calligraphic message, we learn about Master Gedatsu Kongo's fortitude -- his never-give-up spirit, which drove him to push forward with the propagation of the Gedatsu teachings even in a difficult time.

Some of you may remember the Northridge earthquake, which struck Los Angeles 30 years ago on January 17, 1994. On the same day of the following year, exactly one year apart, the Great Hanshin Earthquake hit the Kobe area in Japan. Then in 2011, we were all shocked by the Great East Japan Earthquake that hit the Tohoku area, which triggered powerful tsunami waves, causing massive damage and destruction. I cannot even begin to imagine how hard life must have been for those disaster victims, but I can definitely say it must have been their great inner strength that helped them overcome such hardships.

**"Inner strength is usually hidden deep inside of us in peaceful and uneventful times but manifests its power once any emergency occurs."**

Inner strength is usually hidden deep inside of us in peaceful and uneventful times but manifests its power once any emergency occurs. Such beautiful, noble spirit of many disaster victims, represented by their perseverance and compassion for others, has taught me many lessons.

This is exactly an expression of spirit that creates order out of chaos and makes us realize that "the beginning" (that Gedatsu Kongo wrote about in his 1941 New Year message) is the challenges we face now and today, not something that dates far back in history. It is a solid fact that our ancestors never gave up on passing the baton of life from one generation to another since ancient times till now – all along the way overcoming adversity and hardships while experiencing numerous disasters.

*(Continued on page 6)*

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Translation by **Akiko Suzuki**  
Member of Ookayama Branch, Tokyo

*("Activate Gedatsu" – continued from page 5)*

Drawing an analogy from Master Gedatsu Kongo's words, "leaping forward by launching one new business after another, and more," I would say that our ancestors' efforts must have been "repeating one reconstruction after another, and more." Our ancestors have been taking noble steps in history, rising above dire situations and emerging from rubble and scorched land to build societies and nations with their lofty spirit.

**"To always remember [our ancestors], we should live our lives with sincere appreciation and show our gratitude every day."**

We should never forget our ancestors, who made it possible for us to live today. We should never, ever forget them. To always remember them, we should live our lives with sincere appreciation and show our gratitude every day. Our ancestors' spirit will come alive through our acts of appreciation.

Seiji Ozawa, the internationally acclaimed Japanese conductor, passed away on February 6 this year. As you all know, Mr. Ozawa always pursued the highest levels of performance in music and was admired by people all over the world.

As a Japanese conductor focusing on Western classical music, he opened doors to new possibilities in understanding and expressing music and brought universal value to music. Furthermore, *he* devoted much of his energy to educating young musicians, which touched us so deeply.

I was especially moved when I watched a documentary program featuring an orchestra, organized and conducted by Mr. Ozawa and made up of fellow musicians who perform around the world, delivering wonderful performances. Players in the orchestra are individually highly skilled, and they bring their talents together to play in harmony with each other to deliver beautiful music. This made me realize something important.

Today, our world is full of difficult problems and conflicts, and clashes never cease to exist. Needless to say, it is important to strive to achieve world peace without giving up even in this chaotic world. At a time like this, what we need to do for our future world is to bring harmony by respecting each other's positions and roles, just like Mr. Ozawa's orchestra.

Master Gedatsu Kongo wrote in "Music and Gedatsu" that religion and music have been intertwined since ancient times, explaining the origin of music and history of religion. I think learning music and learning Gedatsu have much in common.

**"We can only create value from Gedatsu by putting the teachings into action in our daily lives."**

Unlike paintings or sculptures, completed work in music is not something tangible. When music is composed, it is produced in the form of sheet music, but the value of music is only recognized when it is actually played. This characteristic of music is similar to learning Gedatsu, in how we focus on putting what we learn into practice. Just like music, whose value comes to life through actual performance, we can only create value from Gedatsu by putting the teachings into action in our daily lives.

Furthermore, just like a musician who thoroughly reads the sheet music to understand the composer's intention, in order to express aspects of spirituality, we need to learn the Gedatsu teachings on a deeper level to be better aligned with Master Gedatsu Kongo's spirit.

Let us all put the Gedatsu teachings into action in our daily lives and live a happy life full of joy. Let us all build a peaceful and happy family and help people around us and society.

Now, I would like to conclude my speech by praying that we will all live in harmony with nature and all creatures to achieve a mutually prosperous world.

Thank you.



## MARCH 2024 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$3,368

**General Donations:** J. Tanaka, A. Sebe, M/M C. Tanaka, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, M. Fukushima, M. Rodriguez, M. Lumpkin, No Name, P. Harada, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M R. Chan, S. Taketa, T. Bartos

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

M/M G. Tahara	Memorial Tower appreciation – in memory of Kiyoko Oto
M/M R. Ito	New Year greeting
R. Yamamura	Spring Festival appreciation
M/M D. Ide	“Never Forgotten” memorial service – in memory of John Chin, Uncle John Hatae, Ide/Kino ancestors
J. Tanaka	“Never Forgotten” memorial service – in memory of Fred Tanaka
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for “Never Forgotten” memorial service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for March Appreciation service
A. Sebe	Kansha for <i>Ohigan</i> service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for Spring <i>Ohigan</i> Appreciation service
M/M S. Sekikawa	Kansha for <i>Ohigan</i> and Appreciation service
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation for Spring <i>Higan</i> service

### **Southern California** Total: \$5,255

**General:** A. Tsujimura, Anonymous, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, J. Hamamoto, J. Ito, J. Kaku, J. Wakasa, K. Fujii, M. Kimura, M. Mizokami, M. Nakamura, M/M A. Shiroishi, M/M B. Mizokami, M/M G. Wood, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M M. Hamada, M/M N. Chodor, M/M N. Okano, M/M P. Young, M/M S. Mukai, M/M S. Shiroishi, M/M T. Hiram, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, Me. Mizokami, N. Takara, No Name, P. Muronaka, P. Nakamura, R. Wakasa, S. Mizokami, T. Ishida, T. Okimura, T. Murakami, Y. Oishi

#### **Special Acknowledgments**

A. Tsujimura	Appreciation for car blessing
M/M P. Nakamura	Appreciation for 49-day service for Mark Nakamura
De. Shiroishi	In memory of Terry Shiroishi
M/M S. Mukai	“Never Forgotten” service for Fred Tanaka
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	In memory of Jokutaro Tsujimura and Lily Kuritani
M/M N. Chodor	Appreciation for “Never Forgotten” service for Terry Shiroishi
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
J. Hamamoto	Appreciation for memorial service for Ben Hamamoto
J. Peck	Mizokami ancestor blessing (\$500)
M/M V. Mizokami	Appreciation for ancestor blessing
G. Hass	Ancestor blessing

### **Online Donations:** Total: \$326

**General:** G. Iwata, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

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

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## AROUND OUR CHURCH

### Luncheon taste-testing

Photos at right: Following a recent Sunday service, members of the Sacramento Spiritual Center sampled grilled tacos and other Mexican foods from LaSabrocita, a local eatery/caterer. The savory offerings were strongly member-approved for taste and freshness. All members will be able to enjoy the Mexican luncheon, which is being planned for the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in September.



### Gedatsu Dojo in Taiwan competition

In March, multiple instructors and a student from Gedatsu Kendo Dojo (along with sister dojo, Shofukan Dojo) took part in the 2024 International City Kendo Competition, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Kaohsiung Butokuden Competition in Taiwan. They were among numerous practitioners from around the globe who gathered for competitions and performances.



Photo at right: Representing Gedatsu Dojo, (from left) Katsumi Chinen (head instructor, Shofukan Dojo), Brad Hsu (Shofukan Dojo student), Takayuki Ono (instructor), and Chinen Katsushi (head instructor).