



GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"If we treat others with compassion
and sincerity cultivated through
religion, we will truly be able
to move people."*

These words by Gedatsu Kongo are reminiscent of the remarkable relationship between the famous American deaf and blind activist, Helen Keller, and her dedicated teacher, Anne Sullivan. Together, they overcame many hardships.

With extraordinary compassion and conviction, Miss Sullivan patiently introduced Helen to the world of words, enabling her pupil to grasp their meanings. With her mind unlocked, Helen was able to speak and voice her thoughts to people throughout the world.

To what degree can we demonstrate compassion and empathy to make a positive difference in the lives of others?



DECEMBER 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	8	10:00 am	Last Appreciation Service of the Year / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Church Clean-up / Regional Board Mtg.
Sat - Tue	21-31		Church Closed for Holidays

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	8	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	15	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Archbishop Kishida Memorial Service / Holiday Program & Potluck Luncheon
Sat - Tue	21-31		Church Closed for Holidays

JANUARY 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Wed	1	9:00 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	5	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	12	10:00 am	First Service of the Year / Regional Board Meeting
Tue	21		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Sun	26	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Wed	1	7:30 am	New Year Homage (until noon)
Sun	5	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	12	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Thu	16	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	19	10:00 am	New Year Appreciation Service
Tue	21		Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
Sun	26	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 1, 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, Atsuko Kawazoe Tsuboi, and Kimi Yamada.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **December 8, 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, Helen Sachiko Nishida, Jonny Numata, Mitsuko Numata, Kou Helen Sakuma, Lily Yuriko Shiba, Sugi Shiba, 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.**

Update Your Contact Information

Please notify the L.A. Church of any changes to your home address, email address, phone/cellphone numbers so that we can send you the latest church communications and announcements. Member contact information is not published. Email **Rev. Naoya** at naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com, call at (626) 288-1212, or text at (626) 233-2359. Or email **Mariko Locheo** at locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com.

Renew Your Church Membership for 2025

Annual membership dues increase to keep pace with the cost of living – the first increase in ten years.

Annual Membership: Renewable annually

Individual	\$60 (including each child age 30+ living at home)
Family	\$100

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

Individual	\$600
Family	\$1,000

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.com.
- Or mail your check – made payable to Gedatsu Church USA – to your nearest church branch.

Donate to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

Membership dues and donations help to ensure the day-to-day operations of our church. Donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund give the church an additional boost- providing 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. Complete the application form that is available at your local church.

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 and prices.

Obituary

Gedatsu Church sadly notes the passing of **Taiko Sugimoto Sensei**, who died in Japan in October at the age of 98. Since the age of seven, when her mother joined Gedatsu, Sugimoto Sensei learned directly from Gedatsu Kongo. For many years, she generously shared her Gedatsu knowledge and experiences with American members, who visited her Kisarazu Branch in Chiba Pref.



Halloween Fun at the Los Angeles Church



Special holiday-themed Sunday School projects, like the kid-decorated trick-or-treat bags, and fun activities, like the Halloween costume and treat parade, delighted children at the October Appreciation Service at the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church.

Later, young and old were treated to a tasty brunch, enjoying the fun table décor that adorned the social hall.



Kojimas to Embark on Their American Adventure



Good News!

Reverend Takao Kojima and his wife, Tomoko, of *Gedatsu-kai* Tokyo (photo at left) were approved for R-1 (religious non-immigrant) visas by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service, clearing the way for their arrival in the coming weeks to the U.S. and the start of their assignment at the Los Angeles Church.



In lower left photo, taken in late the 1970s, youthful Bishop Teruo Okano and Reverend Kojima (first and second from right), visit with members of the Tsujimura family: Yozo and Sumiko Tsujimura in foreground, and Rudy and Arlene Tsujimura in rear.

A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Final Chapter: "For Eternity"



The last formal photo of Gedatsu Kongo in spring 1948

In 1948, President Okano was becoming physically weaker. After the Spring Festival in May, he looked very tired. His personal physician, Dr. Ichimatsu, examined him, saying that it was impossible for an ordinary man in that physical condition to teach or speak at length with anyone. He must have complete rest. However, with great mental fortitude, President Okano continued to teach members.



Gedatsu Kongo addresses attendees at the Spring Festival in May 1948

At this time, construction of the new Tokyo *Dojo* church building was finally completed, and its opening ceremony was held on June 6. President Okano went to Tokyo by car to attend the ceremonies. Looking up at the new church building, he was filled with emotion.

"It's very well done," he said, as tears welled in his eyes and ran down his cheeks.

Addressing the members who packed the main hall, he delivered an exceptionally long speech in a strong voice.

"No matter what situation you may be confronted with," he told members, "you should stand as firm as a rock. One person's error will lead to the errors of many. Please study sincerely and grasp the essence of Gedatsu.

"Remember, the Japanese people are all captives now. Let us endure this difficult time and make every effort to rebuild the country."

After the cheerful banquet, President Okano left. Members stood before the church building to see him off until his car was out of sight. That was to be President Okano's last visit to Tokyo.



Opening of the new Tokyo church building, June 6, 1948

After the opening ceremony of the new church building, President Okano's physical condition worsened. Dr. Ichimatsu examined him carefully, administering medications every three hours. By the following day, his condition stabilized, but his prognosis was not good. Dr. Ichimatsu came every day to examine and administer to him.

Teaching despite declining health

From that time, the following words were written on every page of the church journal: "Lengthy consultations with President Okano are discouraged to avoid tiring him." However, whenever his condition improved, President Okano called members into his room to teach.

(Continued on page 5)

On September 2, Hirano, the head priest of Sennyuji Temple, visited *Goreichi*. President Okano expressed his firm determination to protect Sennyuji after his death. He also requested that Hirano allow him to rest in the grounds of the temple after his death.

Hirano considered for a while and said, "I cannot make a decision by myself. I must discuss this with all priests of the temple. We must also consult the Imperial Household Office. We all realize your sincerity to protect the Imperial Family temple. We will do our best to grant your request." Hirano left, promising to bring him good news.

A great honor is bestowed

Soon after, President Okano received a letter from Sennyuji, permitting *Gedatsu-kai* to perpetually use approximately one acre of the Sennyuji grounds. President Okano's long-cherished dream was thus realized. Reading the letter, President Okano was moved to tears, saying emotionally: "I was born of a peasant's family. Now, I am allowed to use the grounds near the Imperial Mausoleum in the Sennyuji Temple as my resting place after I die. This is the greatest honor for me and all members."

In September, President Okano told some of his close associates, "I have spoken and written everything that I want to say. My duty on earth is completed. After my death, please read my books repeatedly. The book entitled *Shinko*, or 'Sincere Practice,' is especially important. Though it is a small book, it contains everything. Please read it again and again until you fully understand it. You may avoid the clutches of man-made laws, but you will never be able to evade the Law of Nature. Please study and practice Gedatsu sincerely and become happy."

On October 10, the day of the Fall Festival, Dr. Ichimatsu forbade President Okano to speak or even appear before the audience, instructing attendants to keep him at rest. However, when members from all parts of the country gathered in *Goreichi*, President Okano said, "They came here from great distances, so I will speak to them." He then spoke in a strong voice through a microphone.

President Okano told the audience: "It is most important for man to practice humility and poverty. You are too clever. A knowledgeable person easily quarrels with others. Understand that humility is the best way to live a happy life. When you sincerely pray for other's happiness, you will surely be happy, too."

"After I die, I will be allowed to rest in Sennyuji in Kyoto. If you want, you will also be allowed to rest there as a spirit after you die. I have no earthly attachments now. Please study Gedatsu with all your heart and go forward step by step. Man must have a taste of humanity. Enjoy humanity to the fullest."

Listening attentively, the audience wept, feeling President Okano's love and compassion. When he finished his speech, President Okano said, "I feel better now. I want to meet everyone."

However, he was told, "It will be too stressful for you to speak to each of them, so each branch will pay its respects through a representative."

Paying final respects to their beloved teacher

President Okano agreed. He sat on a legless chair to receive each member. Representatives from each branch quietly entered the room one after another, looking at President Okano through their tears and bowing deeply. He responded with compassionate smiles. It took about 30 minutes for 2,700 people to pay their last respects to President Okano. This was his last Grand Festival.

On October 15, the day of the Appreciation Service, the instructors thought President Okano would be unable to deliver a sermon, but he told them to set up a microphone. He then made a speech from his bed.

"Embracing each of you in my heart, I've always wished you to be able to stand on your own feet. This is my dearest wish. As long as I live, even if I fall down at a microphone and cough blood, I will never stop speaking for the sake of your happiness. May all of you be happy and healthy. Oh, how sacred Gedatsu is!"

This was President Okano's last sermon.

Final days, final words

From October 23, President Okano's condition deteriorated. Nonetheless, when someone came for instruction, he met the person. On the evening of October 29, his condition took a sudden turn for the worse. Two doctors came to examine him, and the next morning, Dr. Ichimatsu came. President Okano's condition became stable in the evening. He called his close associates to his bedside and said, "I won't be able to live for more than a few days."

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(Biography – Continued from page 5)

Listening to his words, they all cried. Beaming with a compassionate smile, President Okano told them, “The Three Monuments in *Goreichi* – the Sun Spirit Monument, All Souls Monument and Monument of Encomium – represent the essence of the Gedatsu teaching. When you sincerely pray at these monuments, I will teach you whatever you need. My soul is immortal. I will never die. Only my physical body will disappear. I wonder how much you may miss me when my body disappears from your view.” President Okano then looked at them with peaceful eyes.

Grateful for his doctors’ care

On November 3, 1948, Dr. Ichimatsu came and told President Okano that he had to travel on business. President Okano then said, “Dr. Ichimatsu, thank you very much for your kind care for a long time.”

It was President Okano’s farewell to Dr. Ichimatsu, who had treated him since 1943. After a short time, Dr. Banno, who was a Gedatsu member, came from Nagoya. President Okano then asked him, “Could you examine me today, Dr. Banno?”

At first, Banno declined his request because he felt too unworthy to even feel his pulse. But, at President Okano’s earnest urging, Banno examined him carefully. When he finished the examination, Banno bowed deeply and said, “Thank you very much, President Okano.” He could say nothing more. Banno left the room and cried, because he could not hear the second beat of President Okano’s heart.

Concern, compassion for members to the last

Immediately thereafter, President Okano told the trainees to prepare hot meals for the members who came from a distance, showing his concern for members until the last moment of his life. In the evening, he fell asleep quietly. Dr. Ichimatsu returned from Kamakura and found President Okano sleeping soundly. All his family and relatives were called to his bedside. After 10 p.m., he fell into a comatose state.

On November 4, at 1:20 a.m., President Okano uttered loudly, “Ah....Um!” Dr. Ichimatsu had a tense look. After a short while, he announced President Okano’s death.

The mysterious light on the Master’s passing

At that time, someone realized that President Okano’s brother, Shosuke, was not there, so a trainee went to inform him of President Okano’s death. When he went outside, he was surprised at the brightness of the sky, although it was a moonless night.

“Why is it so light?” he thought, as he looked up at the sky. He then saw a bright ray of light coming from the direction of the Tenmanten Shrine, traveling toward the forest of *Goreichi* and passing over the Sun Spirit Monument. The trainee observed the light ray in surprise for some time.

Recovering his composure, he rushed to Shosuke’s home under the brilliant light ray, seeing the road clearly in the light. However, when he reached Shosuke’s home and came outside again, he found himself completely surrounded by darkness.



Bishop Eizan Kishida delivers memorial address at funeral for Gedatsu Kongo

President Okano’s private funeral was held on November 11, 1948. The formal funeral was observed on November 27, officiated by the head priest of Daigoji Temple with thousands of members from all parts of the country in attendance. Daigoji Temple gave him the Buddhist name *Gedatsu Kongo*. Since then, President Okano came to be called *Master Gedatsu Kongo*. Gedatsu Kongo’s ashes were enshrined in the *Kaie-do* Hall of Sennyuji Temple after the 100-day memorial service.

(Continued on back page)

OCTOBER 2024 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$3,133

General Donations: J. Tanaka, A. Sebe, M/M D. Ide, G./P. Ota, J. Detwiler J. Sebe, K. Tateishi, K. Ota Schubert, M. Rodriguez, No Name, R. Ide, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa

Special Acknowledgments

P./D. Tateishi	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for October "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M. Fukushima	Fall Festival appreciation
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for October Appreciation Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for All Souls Appreciation Service
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for All Souls Appreciation Service
M/M C. Tanaka	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Monthly donation gratitude
Anonymous	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund
M/M J. Horner	Appreciation for memorial service for Hsueh Horner (\$600)

Southern California Total: \$2,960

General: M/M R. Allum, Y. Elvin, K. Fujii, K. Giroux, J. Hamamoto, T. Ishida, J. Ito, J. Kaku, K. Kuritani, M/M K. Kuritani, J. Mah, Anonymous, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, M. Nakamura, E. Ogawa, Y. Oishi, M. Okada, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M S. Shaklan, D. Shiroishi, A. Tsujimura, C. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, L. Young, E. Pinedo, H. Ogawa

Special Acknowledgments

M/M Ho. Tsujimura	In memory of Roger Nishida and Lori Tsujimura
Hi. Tsujimura	"Never Forgotten" Service for Loretta Tsujimura
M/M T. Matsumoto	In memory of Hiroshi and Suzuya Nakaguchi
D. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo

The L.A. Church acknowledges the many contributions – in cash, in-kind donations, and volunteer services – from members and friends to the successful Crafts & Bento Faire in October. Cash donations in October (in addition to those acknowledged in last month's *Companion*) were received from J. Ito, M/M P. Reid, D. Mukai, M/M G. Wood.

Online Donations: Total: \$376

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

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

2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

January

1 (Wed)	New Year's Homage
2-3 (Thu-Fri)	Church Closed
12 (Sun)	Sacramento First Service of the Year
19 (Sun)	L.A. New Year's Service
21 (Tue)	Church Closed (in lieu of Martin Luther King Day)

February

16 (Sun)	L.A. Sun Spirit Service
18 (Tue)	Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents Day)

March

14 (Fri)	Propagation Meeting 10 am via Zoom (TBD)
15 (Sat)	Board of Directors Meeting 10 am via Zoom
16 (Sun)	L.A. <i>Higan</i> Service
23 (Sun)	Sacramento <i>Higan</i> Service
30 (Sun)	Church Closed

April

13 (Sun)	Spring Festival 9:30 am
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May

11 (Sun)	Sacramento Mothers' Day Service
18 (Sun)	L.A. Mothers' Day Service
25 (Sun)	Sacramento plaque burning (<i>Joen-no-gi</i>)
27 (Tue)	Church Closed (in lieu of Memorial Day)

June

8 (Sun)	Sacramento Mother Kiyota Memorial Service
15 (Sun)	L.A. Mother Kiyota Memorial Service

July

4 (Fri)	Church Closed (Independence Day)
13 (Sun)	Sac'to <i>Obon</i> Service / Graduates Honored
20 (Sun)	L.A. <i>Obon</i> Service / Graduates Honored
24-27 (Thu-Sun)	Youth Camp in Sacramento (TBD)

August

17 (Sun)	L.A. <i>Benzaiten</i> Service
24 (Sun)	Sacramento <i>Benzaiten</i> Service
31 (Sun)	Fall Grand Festival 9:30 am

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*(Biography – Continued from
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Gedatsu Kongo's ashes are transferred to their eternal resting place in the Memorial Tower on the grounds of Sennyuji Temple.



On the sixth anniversary of Gedatsu Kongo's passing, in November of 1954, the Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower was dedicated on the grounds of Sennyuji Temple in Japan.

Gedatsu Kongo's ashes were transferred to the tower, where they remain enshrined forever.



*This concludes "A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo." This 12-part series on the life of our Founder was condensed from The Biography of Gedatsu Kongo, which was published in 1988 (with English translation published in 1998). As with many of our Gedatsu written materials, we are gratefully indebted to **Reverend Hisakazu Taki**, who translated the original volumes into English and condensed them for this series.*

Editors, Gedatsu Companion