



# GEDATSU COMPANION



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 News and Announcements
- 3 Around Our Church
- 4 Gedatsu Kongo's "Five Principles" and Commentary
- 7 November Offerings

### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"The fundamental path of humanity  
is to live according to the Divine Will."*

In his teachings, Gedatsu Kongo repeatedly said that we humans, composed of body and mind, are spiritual offsprings of God.

Therefore, it follows that the body of God, as our parent, is the universe, and all its phenomena are expressions of God's mind, or will.

In our hectic, ever-changing society, how can we learn to sense the operation of the universe and to align and harmonize ourselves with its divine will?

This, Gedatsu students, is our lesson to be studied.

## 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	<i>Hiho</i> 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	<i>Mochi-tsuki</i> Event (see page 3)

## FEBRUARY 2025

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	9	10:00 am	Sun Spirit Service / Regional Board Meeting
Tue	18		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
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 / Sun Spirit Service
Tue	18		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
Thu	20	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	23	10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice



### January “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, January 5, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Richard Aadland, Natsuko Furukawa, Jane Kaoru Ide, Hatsuko Mishima, Teru Nakayama, Teiichiro Noritake, Bernard Sakamoto, Fudeyo Sekikawa, Genkichi Sekikawa, Tsuneko Sekikawa, Yoshiko Sekikawa, Machi Takagi, Taro Takemura, Rose Yamamoto, and Kenneth Kenichiro Yasuda.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, January 12, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **David H. Dyson III, Richard Higashi, Sanshiro Hirami, Aileen T. Hirayama, Terry Teruko L. Imuta, Elaine Rose Kaproff, Takako Karplus, Walter Karplus, Yoshihiko Kitagawa, Tadashi Thomas Matsumoto, Kazuko Matsuura, Kiyoko Michiuye, Konami Miyakawa, Frank Miyamura, Asaye Mizuki, Fumi Murakami, Katsuyo Nagao, Hisano Nakamura, Mark Yukimasa Nakamura, Misuko Nakamura, Mohei Nakamura, Reiko Nakamura, Hiroko Notoya, Chika Okimura, Motoichi Okimura, Eiko Onishi, Chiyoko Sato, Grace Yuko Sato, Florence Sueyoshi, Moto Tanji, Saburo Tanji, Dennis Koichi Toguchi, Nobuko Tsujimura, Sumiko Tsujimura, Kenneth Kenichiro Yasuda, Noriko Yoshihara, and Frank Young.**

### Return Your Old Holy Tea Plaques

If you ordered new holy tea plaques for the new year, the church urges you to show the proper respect for your old plaques. Give prayers of appreciation to your old plaques, wash and dry them thoroughly, then return them to your local church. They will be burned in a plaque-burning service in Sacramento.

### Have You Renewed Your 2025 Church Membership?

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

<u>Annual Membership:</u> Renewable annually	
Individual	\$60 (including each child age 30+ living at home)
Family	\$100
<u>Lifetime Membership:</u> 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](http://www.gedatsu-usa).
- 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 office.

### 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.



### Experience *Mochi-tsuki* – A Japanese Cultural Tradition!

- Come to the L.A. Gedatsu Church on **Sunday, January 26, at 10 a.m.** to participate in the Japanese New Year tradition of *mochi-tsuki*.
- Observe the energetic pounding of sweet rice into *mochi* cakes.
- Then enjoy sampling the many varieties of delicious *mochi* offerings!
- Reservations are required to accommodate up to 60 attendees.
- Contact **Mariko Locheo**, office manager, at (626) 288-1212 or [locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com](mailto:locheo.gedatsu.lab@gmail.com) for reservations.
- While the *mochi-tsuki* event is **free**, donations are appreciated.



We are grateful to the following sponsors for this cultural, propagation event:

- Nichigetsukan Martial Arts Program
- L.A. Gedatsu Church
- L.A. Gedatsu Sunday School

## AROUND OUR CHURCH

### Celebration of Children

In November, Los Angeles Church members and friends observed the annual 7-5-3 Festival, or *Shichi-Go-San*. As part of the traditional Japanese celebration for the well-being and healthy futures of children, parents of children ages seven, five, and three years give thanks at the *Ujigami* local guardian shrine and altar for the divine protection and guidance their children receive.

At this year's Festival, **Reverend Naoya Okano** gave prayers for **Yuri Ishida** (in photo at right). Yuri is the daughter of **Michelle Ishida** and the granddaughter of **Mark and Marie Ishida**.



As part of the L.A. Church Sunday Service, the congregation offered flowers to the spirit of **Master Gedatsu Kongo** in remembrance of his birthday and memorial anniversary.

### Celebration of Young Adults

Los Angeles Church member **Reiko Kayla Hirayama**, 21, recently celebrated her "coming of age" in the Japanese tradition of *Seijin-shiki*, a ceremony marking her transition to adulthood. Officiated by **Reverend Naoya Okano**, the ceremony was performed before the *Ujigami* shrine to offer appreciation for Reiko's divine protection and guidance through life.

Reiko, the daughter of long-time member, **Janet Hirayama**, wore *furisode*, the traditional Japanese kimono style with long sleeves worn by young women.



## Gedatsu Kongo's "Five Principles"

### 1. *The Great Path of God*

*The Universal God is present when and wherever sincere prayer is offered. How wondrous it is that, when you live with sincere appreciation, any human sufferings –physical or spiritual – are completely resolved through the grace and compassion of God.*

### 2. *The Law of Nature*

*Each day consists of morning, noon and night.*

*Each month has its beginning, middle and end.*

*The four seasonal transitions are spring, summer, fall and winter.*

*Modern science – no matter how advanced – can neither alter nor conquer Nature.*

### 3. *Highest Moral Conduct*

*May you live according to the highest moral conduct. There are three types of morality:*

*1. To demand compensation without putting forth effort is immoral.*

*2. To put forth effort and ask for compensation is average moral conduct.*

*3. To put forth effort and ask for nothing in return is the highest moral conduct.*

*To await Nature's blessings is the highest moral conduct.*

### 4. *Self-reflection*

*Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world. When you observe the present condition of the world, you see that egoism knows no bounds. If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper. This is because, when you make no demands, blessings are bestowed naturally upon you. Please think deeply on this truth.*

### 5. *Laws of the Universe*

*The Laws of the Universe are integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude. These are the national treasures of Japan since ancient times.*

#### A Word about the "Five Principles"

The "Five Principles" is considered the foundation of Master Gedatsu Kongo's essential teachings of the Gedatsu Church. The *Gedatsu Companion* published the "Five Principles" as a special insert in its August 2013 issue. It was accompanied by commentary by **Reverend Hisakazu Taki**, who provided invaluable insight into the Founder's ideas and intent. Today, more than 10 years after that publication – and 91 years after its initial publication in Japan – we again are pleased to share this important document with American members.

We hope that through its careful reading, Gedatsu members will gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the underlying, fundamental principles of the Gedatsu Church.

Editors of *Gedatsu Companion*

### Commentary on the “Five Principles” by Reverend Hisakazu Taki

*Gedatsu Kongo, founder of the Gedatsu Church, established the Gedatsu teaching in Japan in 1929. The “Five Principles,” which was published in 1934, constitutes the Founder’s outline of his essential teachings, in which he summarized his thoughts on Gedatsu for the first time.*

*When **Bishop Eizan Kishida** started the publication of the Gedatsu monthly newsletter in 1935, the “Five Principles” appeared in the first issue. Later, Gedatsu Kongo recorded his reading of the “Five Principles” and distributed it among members. It is this recording, in the Founder’s own voice, that we hear at our annual Grand Festivals in Sacramento every spring and fall.*

*Although the “Five Principles” consist of five parts, this is not why it is called “Five Principles.” The five principles to which Gedatsu Kongo refers – integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity, and gratitude – are explained in the last part of this writing. Gedatsu Kongo believed these five human virtues to be the five principles of humanity.*

**Principle 1** explains the most important point about our religious faith: **our unconditional trust in God.**

Human thinking is generally egoistic, but we are normally unconscious of this fact. Religious faith leads us to abandon our egoistic thoughts and trust all things to God, or the Universal Life Force, which allows us to live as we naturally should.

Prayer is to express appreciation and leave everything to God. When you pray, you say, “Thank you for allowing me to live this precious life today. I will try my best to fulfill my duties. Please guide me most appropriately.” Your sincere prayer connects you to God or the Universal Life Force. When you pray sincerely, you will be guided appropriately.

There is nothing meaningless in the world. Everything, even difficulty or hardship, has meaning. Therefore, no matter what difficulties you may have, do not avoid them. Instead, face the difficulties in front of you, and try your best in every situation. You will then be guided to the appropriate path. Human intelligence cannot explain this, but with sincere practice, you will see God’s blessings in your life. This is the essence of religious faith.

**Principle 2** is about the **Law of Nature**. You may think everything mentioned here is obvious. Everyone knows the movement of the celestial bodies and the four seasonal changes. It is important, however, to perceive the absolute law in the movement of Nature. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west each day. Nature functions consistently. All beings, including human beings, are allowed to exist by this absolute law of Nature. This realization is the beginning of your religious faith.

We usually live according to our thoughts and feelings. But our life is more than our thoughts and senses. We are allowed to live by the grace of Nature. When you are aware of this, you will be able to do your best in your duties without selfish thoughts. When you live daily in this manner, you will be guided in the best direction.

**Principle 3** is about **moral excellence**. Three types of moral conducts are mentioned here. The first and second moral conducts – “to demand compensation without putting forth effort” and “to put forth effort and ask for compensation” – are common human attitudes and behaviors, depending on our desires, thoughts and actions. “To put forth effort and ask for nothing in return” transcends the average human’s attitude and behavior. Human thoughts are egoistic, knowingly or unknowingly, which is the cause of various human miseries in the world. Gedatsu Kongo encouraged us to discard our selfish thoughts and leave everything to God. When you do your best in your daily duties without thought of compensation, you will then surely be guided appropriately by God. This is the essence of religious faith.

Gedatsu Kongo said, “To await Nature’s blessings is the highest moral conduct,” meaning that we should diligently perform our duties without thought of return. God will then guide us appropriately.

You can see how this explanation supports and expands on the statements in Principles 1 and 2, deepening the meaning of religious faith.

**Principle 4** explains **egoism and the importance of self-reflection**. Since founding the Gedatsu teaching, Gedatsu Kongo persistently stressed the importance of self-reflection. He believed this to be the key to create happiness.

He said, “Egoism destroys self, home, country and the world.” Egoism is the very cause of human miseries. By observing the present world condition, you can readily understand this. From quarrels and discords in human relations to the conflicts among nations, it is evident that egoism is their underlying cause. Gedatsu Kongo encouraged us to discard egoism in order to create peace and happiness in the world.

This sounds quite reasonable in theory. However, when I thought about this in terms of my own life, I found this very hard to actually practice. I had doubts about this point for a long time, but I now have a satisfactory understanding. Let me explain.

Gedatsu Kongo stressed the importance of self-renunciation, but you should understand that self-renunciation is different from self-restraint. Self-restraint means to restrain yourself from egoistic thoughts and desires through the power of your will. Your egoistic desires still remain unchanged deep within yourself; they are simply hidden by constraints of morality. Therefore, even if you appear and act in a moral manner in your daily life, conflicts among various desires continue to dwell within you. When your will power weakens, the restrained desires may be released and get out of control.

Self-renunciation is completely different. Gedatsu Kongo did not urge us to restrain our selfish desires within us. He simply encouraged us to clearly see ourselves as we truly are. When you deeply self-reflect, you will surely perceive your shortcomings and selfish attitudes within. You will also realize that you are allowed to live by God, and that you are nurtured by receiving immeasurable blessings from many people and things in the world – even though you may have egoistic thoughts and feelings. When you become aware of this, you will naturally feel grateful for everyone and everything, as well as remorse for your selfish attitude in life. Accordingly, you will not be as selfish as before. This is self-renunciation.

Gedatsu Kongo stated, “If you self-reflect and abandon egoism, you can enjoy happiness and prosper. This is because, when you make no demands, blessings are bestowed naturally upon you.” When you deeply self-reflect, you will see that you are allowed to exist by God, and that you are nurtured by all beings on earth. When you are truly aware of this fact, you will naturally become less selfish than before and will want to help and benefit others. Gedatsu Kongo said this is human nature.

The teaching of Principle 4 again parallels the previous three Principles. When you comprehend that you are allowed to live by God, and fully trust everything to this higher power, you realize that you are already blessed and nurtured and have no need to demand anything. This is the teaching of self-renunciation.

**Principle 5** states that the Laws of the Universe consist of **integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude**. As I mentioned before, the Five Laws refers to these five human virtues. In Japanese, they are called “*Gojo*,” which means the five unchangeable paths of humanity. Gedatsu Kongo believed these five virtues to be the essential laws of humanity.

The first virtue is integrity, which Gedatsu Kongo regarded as sincere faith in God. He urged us to thank God for allowing us to live and to trust everything to God.

The second virtue is filial piety. This is appreciation for the blessings of parents and ancestors, who gave us our physical bodies. Integrity and filial piety should be regarded as the core foundation of humanity, because they identify the source of human existence and where we owe our appreciation for our life’s blessings. In short, we may explain these virtues as “reverence to God and respect for ancestors.”

The third virtue is benevolence, which means love, respect and sincerity for others. When you closely observe your daily life, you realize you are supported by countless people, including your family and friends. You then naturally feel appreciative and thoughtful to others. It is only natural that this attitude brings forth peace and happiness.

*(Continued on back page)*

## NOVEMBER 2024 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$4,200

General Donations: J. Tanaka, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, L. Hirai, M. Fukushima, M. Lumpkin, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. Taketa, T. Bartos, Y. Hirai

#### Special Acknowledgments

M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, Appreciation Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, November "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
A. Sekikawa	With appreciation
J. Tanaka	Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, November Appreciation Service
J. Tanaka	Appreciation for Gedatsu Kongo Birthday Service
L. Tomita	In memory of Shizue Kodani
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation to Gedatsu Kongo
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, monthly donation
Anonymous	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund
A. Sebe	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$2,000)

### **Southern California** Total: \$3,146

General: A. DeWitt, Anonymous, K. Fujii, M/M T. Hiram, M/M M. Ishida, T. Ishida, J. Ito, M. Kimura, M/M T. Matsumoto, Anonymous, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M G. Morika, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, M/M L. Muronaka, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M S. Shalkan, M/M A. Shiroishi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood, M/M P. Young, L. Odon.

#### Special Acknowledgments

T. Ishida	Safe travel to and from Japan
T. Ishida	Memorial service for Hitoshi and Fumio Ishida
Kaku/Mahoney Families	"Never Forgotten" service for George Imuta
D. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
Kaku/Mahoney Families	To honor Master Gedatsu Kongo
Do. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Gedatsu Kongo birthday

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

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

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

## 2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

### **February**

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

### **March**

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**

<b>13 (Sun)</b>	<b>Spring Festival 9:30 am</b>
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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
<b>31 (Sun)</b>	<b>Fall Grand Festival 9:30 am</b>

### **September**

2 (Tue)	Church Closed (in lieu of Labor Day)
21 (Sun)	L.A. <i>Higan</i> Service
28 (Sun)	Sacramento <i>Higan</i> Service

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PERMIT NO. 574

***“Five Principles” – Continued from page 6)***

The fourth virtue is fidelity, which means faithfully executing your duties. This requires you to self-reflect to see if you have completely fulfilled your obligations. When you realize you are supported by countless people and things, you naturally feel grateful and wish to reciprocate in service to others. Benevolence and fidelity should be regarded as one – a natural response to the realization of your life’s dependency on others.

The last virtue is gratitude, which is the expression of respect and appreciation for all people and things. With this quality, you will be able to truly work for peace and accomplish everything. Gratitude is the core virtue for humanity.

Gedatsu Kongo regarded these five virtues as the essence of Gedatsu, and called them the Five Laws of humanity. He said this teaching is not his creation, but the spiritual heritage of Japan\* since its founding. He encouraged us to demonstrate these qualities in our daily lives to achieve peace and happiness.

*\* Gedatsu Kongo’s reference to Japan must be understood in the context of his time and culture. The Founder respected and treasured Japan’s spiritual tradition from ancient times, and he strived to revive the Japanese spiritual heritage in modern Japan. Therefore, while he references Japan, Gedatsu Kongo makes clear that the five virtues, or laws, pertain to all of humanity – not to any one nation or people.*

