



# GEDATSU COMPANION

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 News and Announcements
- 4 *Mochi-tsuki* at L.A. Church
- 5 “Gedatsu Teaching 2” and Commentary
- 6 The Sacred Practice of *Goho Shugyo*
- 7 January Offerings

### Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*“Our ancestor spirits are our best guides for bringing us closer to God.”*

Gedatsu Kongo taught us that the spiritual world is structured in three realms, from highest to lowest: God’s realm, spiritual realm, and human realm.

The key question is, how can we enter God’s realm?

Attempting to reach God’s realm directly from the human realm is like scaling a towering, steep mountain – an almost impossible feat.

However, the spiritual realm, where our ancestors dwell, serves as a staircase or mountain path that leads toward the summit. By following the path our ancestors have cultivated, we can take essential steps toward advancing into God’s realm.

## MARCH 2025

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Sun	9	10:00 am	No Service
Tue	11	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting – via Google Meet
Sun	23	10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Higan</i> 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 <i>Higan</i> Service
Thu	20	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	23	10:00 am	Culture Class: “ <i>Shakyo</i> – Immerse Yourself in <i>Hannya Shingyo</i> ” (See page 3)

### CHURCHWIDE

Sat	15	9:00 am	Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom
Sat	22	12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom

## APRIL 2025

### NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	6	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Tue	8	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	13	9:30 am	<b>Spring Grand Festival</b> <b><i>Saito Goma</i> Fire Ceremony</b>
Sun	27	10:00	No Service

### SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	6	10:00 am	“Never Forgotten” Memorial Service
Sun	13	9:30 am	Spring Grand Festival (Sacramento)
Sun	20	10:00 am	Appreciation Service Easter Service and Easter Egg Hunt
Thu	24	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	27	10:00 am	Culture Class: “How to Make <i>Chirashi</i> and <i>Kimpira Renkon</i> ”



### March “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, March 2, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **John Chin, Sue Chin, Kasumi Casey Fukagawa, Muneo John Hatae, Rin Ide, Eleanor Ikesaki, Toyota Kino, Richard Shinichiro Kitasoe, Kotsuru Noritake, Sumiko Sebe, Takeo Sekikawa, Kumagoro Takagi, Fred Shigeru Tanaka, Mary Mitsue Tsuboi and Tamimasa Tsuboi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, March 9, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Meiko Arakawa, Vincent Giroux, Ayako Hamamoto, Shikazo Hamaoka, Ernest Hirayama, Naoe Kimura, Lily Yuriko Kuritani, Bill Long, Norma Long, Hisano Miyashita, Tomiko Mizokami, Masao Mori, Chisato Naito, Shigeru Nakamura, Hiroshi Nakatani, Tokumi Nakayama, Joe Sanchez, Joseph Sanchez Jr., Sumiko Sebe, Harunaga Shiba, Tom Masami Shiba, Terry Fumio Shiroishi, Shigeru Fred Tanaka, Tokutaro Tsujimura, and Yoshio Wakasa.**

### In the Aftermath of L.A. Wildfires

With courage and resilience, the communities in the greater Los Angeles Area that were affected by the devastating wildfires in early January are slowly recovering. Among the tens of thousands of houses and structures that were lost, are the homes of many of our friends and loved ones. Fortunately, our Gedatsu members in the L.A. area were safe, although many were temporarily evacuated during the fires.

The L.A. Church wishes to express appreciation to *Gedatsu-kai* Japan for its generous gift of \$30,000 to assist any Gedatsu members affected by the fires.



### Spring Grand Festival Sunday, April 13 – 9:30 a.m. Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento

Program I – *Gochi* Sanctuary Service  
Program II – *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony

- Members and public are invited to attend.
- **Order your *Saito Goma* plaques by March 16.** Application forms are available at your local church.
- **Reserve a lunch.** Lunches will be available for \$10 per person. Menu to be announced. Reserve a lunch by contacting your local church.

***Gedatsu-kai* Minister to Speak at Spring Festival**  
Reverend Shigehiro Kizaki, director of propagation, *Gedatsu-kai* Japan, will be the keynote speaker at the Spring Festival on April 13. Reverend Kizaki addressed the congregation via video at the 2023 Spring Festival and in person at the 2023 Fall Festival. We are grateful for his attendance. Let’s extend a warm welcome to him.



### L.A. Church Women’s Club Announces New Officers

The Los Angeles Gedatsu Church Women’s Club recently announced newly elected officers to serve two-year terms:

**Pam Shalkan:** president  
**Judy Hamamoto / Ikuko Kuritani:** co-vice presidents  
**Diana Mukai:** recording secretary  
**Yoko Oishi:** corresponding secretary  
**Marie Ishida:** treasurer  
**Jo Ann Shiroishi:** advisor

Read on page 3 about the fun cultural programs and propagation activities the Women’s Club has planned for the fourth Sunday of each month.



### L.A. Church Launches Monthly Cultural, Community-building Programs

The L.A. Women's Club is pursuing an ambitious agenda in 2025 that includes programs and activities to engage church members and non-members alike. Scheduled on the fourth Sunday of each month are classes focused on different cultures and traditions:

- February 23 – “The Art of *Matcha* Tea” led by **Tomoko and Atsuko Kojima**
- March 23 – “*Shakyo*. Immerse Yourself in *Hannya Shingyo*” led by **Reverend Takao Kojima and Reverend Naoya Okano**. (See below.)
- April 27 – “How to Make *Chirashi* and *Renkon Kinpira*” led by **Judy Hamamoto and Yoko Oishi**

Future classes will be announced. Classes are free. Fees are charged to cover the cost of materials and vary by class. Donations are welcome. All classes are open to the public and held at the church.

“These fourth-Sunday programs are designed to build our church community and bring together members and guests in a variety of fun activities,” says **Pam Shaklan**, newly elected Women's Club president. “They showcase and share the skills and expertise of our members – in cooking, art, sewing, flower arranging, calligraphy, and more – with others who are interested in learning. We invite everyone to attend.”

### *Manbu Kuyo* Service in Japan

Twice a year, as part of the Gedatsu Spring and Fall Grand Festivals in Japan, a memorial rite for spirits is conducted on the *Goreichi* holy grounds. Called *Manbu Kuyo* – literally meaning “ten thousand expressions of respect” – the ceremony is performed to liberate all spirits from suffering and to transform them into protective spirits who benefit the living.

If you would like to apply for a *Manbu Kuyo* certificate, complete and submit by April 6 the application form enclosed in this newsletter and available at your local church. It is recommended that you consult with one of the ministers, who can explain the significance of the service and various categories on the form, as well as guide you on the appropriate *Kuyo* for which you should apply.

Following the *Manbu Kuyo* Ceremony in Japan, applicants will be sent certificates signifying the completion of this sacred prayer.



The *Manbu Kuyo* Service is solemnly performed on the *Goreichi* holy grounds in Japan.



### “*Shakyo*. Immerse Yourself in *Hannya Shingo*.”

Practice the Calming Art of Writing the Heart Sutra with Japanese Calligraphy

- Come to the L.A. Church on **Sunday, March 23, at 10 a.m.** to participate in the peaceful, ancient Buddhist practice of *Shakyo*. Class is instructed by **Reverend Takao Kojima** and **Reverend Naoya Okano**.
- Learn to write the Heart Sutra (*Hannya Shingyo*) with traditional brush and ink. A brush pen is also available for beginners.
- Experience the meditative benefits of *Shakyo*: peace of mind, improved concentration, spiritual calm.
- All ages are welcome (as long as you can sit quietly for up to 90 minutes).
- Class is free. Fee is charged for supplies (brush, calligraphy paper, ink, and ink stick). \$5 to rent supplies. \$20 to purchase a supply kit.
- Donations are appreciated.
- For reservations, contact **Rev. Okano** at (626) 288-1212 or (626) 233-2359 or [naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com](mailto:naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com).





### Joyful *Mochi-tsuki* Event Delights Members and Guests

The L.A. Gedatsu Church welcomed the Year of the Snake in energetic fashion by hosting its first *mochi-tsuki*, the ancient Japanese New Year ritual of pounding steamed rice into *mochi* rice cakes, using traditional wooden mallets and mortars.

More than six dozen attendees – half non-member guests – gathered outside the church on Sunday morning, January 26, to watch the *mochi*-making performance. They observed three rounds of vigorous pounding, and many of them – adults, teens, and children – participated in the final round of pounding. Everyone was then invited into the Social Hall to shape and form their own *komochi* (small *mochi* cakes) and add their flavors of choice: *kinako* (roasted soy bean powder), *isobe* (soy sauce, sugar, *nori*) and *anko* (sweet red bean paste). They sat and enjoyed their tasty *komochi* creations in the company of many new friends. Following the *komochi*-tasting, guests were treated to a Japanese lunch of *ozoni*, Asian cole slaw, tangerine, *senbei*, and hot tea.

The *mochi-tsuki* event, chaired by members, **Nathan and Tae Scott**, and **Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi**, was sponsored by Nichigetsukan, L.A. Gedatsu Church, and the L.A. Gedatsu Sunday School. The event was free. Generous donations from members, family, and friends, covered all expenses. (See list of donors on page 7.)

“Our aim was to bring new faces into our church by sharing a rich cultural experience for everyone to enjoy,” said Jo Ann. “I’m so happy and thankful that we successfully met that goal! Just read the wonderful messages we received.”

- *New member: “This was my first mochi-tsuki. It was interesting watching how grains of rice transform into a soft, white, pillow of dough. Being able to form my own mochi AND eating it, made the day even better! I’m sure everyone enjoyed participating in this fun and informative event. I hope this becomes a yearly celebration of our Japanese heritage.”*
- *Guest: “Thank you for a wonderful day. The mochi-tsuki celebration was a warm and unique experience. It brought back happy memories of my youth, and I really enjoyed sharing these memories with new friends. Many guests had never seen a mochi-tsuki, and so it was a great time of sharing and preserving tradition and culture. I hope this event becomes a tradition at Gedatsu Church.”*
- *Member: “I’ve been a long-time church member. This was one of the best events we’ve had in a long time. The mochi-pounding was exciting, the komochi-flavors were tasty, and the ozoni lunch was delicious! It was fun meeting new people!”*
- *Guest: “What a way to start the Year of the Snake. The mochi event at Gedatsu Church was amazing! Dozens of church members, relatives, and friends had a great time...some for the first time in making mochi. Overall, this special Japanese cultural event was successful at Gedatsu...Let’s all shout, “mochi, mochi, mochi!”*
- *Guest: “My family and I had a wonderful time at mochi-tsuki. We have always enjoyed going to events and services at Gedatsu. I am pleased at the diversity of the people who attend. I appreciate how the Reverends welcome people of other faiths and remind us to appreciate our lives.”*

Photos at right. 1: The *mochi-tsuki* festivities opened with a prayer. 2&3: Teams of pounders performed the rhythmic, energetic *mochi*-pounding ritual. 4&5: Everyone joined in shaping and forming *komochi*. 6: Guests chose their favorite sweet and savory flavorings. 7&8: Members and guests formed new friendships as they enjoyed their delicious *mochi* creations in the music-filled atmosphere of the Social Hall.



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### Gedatsu Teaching 2 By Seiken Okano (Gedatsu Kongo)

*Gedatsu-kyo* monthly newsletter, April 18, 1935  
Translation and Commentary by Reverend Hisakazu Taki

*Reflect thoroughly on your character. By comparing all your past and present deeds, you can become aware of yourself and correct your wrongful attitude. Even your parents, spouse, children, brothers, sisters and all who live together with you cannot truly know you. Only God knows who you really are. Therefore, reflect honestly on yourself without conceit or self-praise. Do not forget that your mind alone creates your future. Your survival or destruction depends solely on you.*

*Your mind expresses itself as your speech and actions. It is essential to know that, if you do not deceive yourself and walk on the right path of humanity, you will be happy and cheerful each day.*

*If you truly practice in this way, you will assuredly enjoy good health, peace and material rewards. Therefore, I hope you will put this into practice. By contrast, if you live with reckless desires and follow an unprincipled path, you shall worry and suffer daily, becoming unhappy, insecure and sick. Consequently, you will lose self, home, status and wealth.*

*Your happiness or unhappiness is totally up to you. Your mind holds the key to create your future. You can go either right or left, to heaven or to hell. It is all up to you. Therefore, I say repeatedly that you should follow the Great Path of God, or the Law of the Universe, and that you should strive to understand God's unconditional love and compassion.*

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#### Commentary:

The basic points of “Gedatsu Teaching 2” are: (1) self-understanding, (2) how our minds work, and (3) the Law of the Universe.

First, Gedatsu Kongo emphasized the importance of self-reflection and self-understanding as the foundation of our peace and happiness. Most human miseries are caused by our lack of self-understanding and our selfish way of thinking. However, it is very difficult to be aware of ourselves as we really are. This is because our mind is the spiritual and mental heritage from generations of ancestors. By comparing our past and present, we can have a better understanding of ourselves and be aware of the deeper layer of our subconscious mind. Gedatsu Kongo said that we can attain true happiness only through self-reflection and correcting our bad habits. Gedatsu practices, such as *Goho-shugyo* (see article on page 6), *Hiho*-meditation and *Amacha Kuyo*, help us become aware of ourselves more deeply and clearly.

Secondly, we should clearly understand that our mind creates our whole life. In our daily lives, we usually are not so aware of how our mind works. But it is obvious

that our mind manifests itself as our daily attitudes and affects people around us in various ways. In other words, our future is totally up to ourselves. However, many people do not seem to clearly understand this. This is why people have a tendency to speak ill of others. But this attitude will not bring about our peace and happiness.

Thirdly, you have to understand that the Gedatsu teaching is based on the Law of the Universe. Gedatsu Kongo said that the Gedatsu teaching is not his creation – that it explains the Universal Law. He encouraged us to live according to the Universal Law, because it is the path of happiness for everyone.

How should we actually live daily? Our Founder stated, “God loves everyone equally.” When you have this heart of love, benevolence, and compassion, you can enjoy true peace, harmony, and happiness.

“Gedatsu Teaching 2” emphatically teaches that our happiness is totally up to ourselves. Gedatsu starts with self and ends with self. Please remember that this is the crucial point of our Gedatsu study and practice.



**Master Gedatsu Kongo** left for our study three sacred practices that are unique to the Gedatsu Church. Two practices – *Amacha Kuyo* blessing and *Holy Hiho* meditation – are performed regularly by members. The third practice, *Goho Shugyo*, is less understood by members, and therefore, far less performed.

Because of the importance of the *Goho Shugyo* practice to the Gedatsu study, we explain the practice in the following article. The Companion is indebted to **Archbishop Kishida** and **Reverends Arthur Sakamoto, Hisakazu Taki, and Kazuo Yamada**, whose writings and sermons were referenced in this article.

### The Sacred Practice of *Goho Shugyo*

It is significant that all three practices incorporate the miraculous power of the Holy *Goho*. The Holy *Goho* consists of the five spiritualistic Sanskrit characters – representing the five aspects of universal life and encompassing the total Cosmic forces, which give life to all things.

Gedatsu Kongo, through his great spiritual powers, realized the sacredness of the Holy *Goho* and discovered, to his amazement, that he was able to manifest the Holy *Goho* by simply writing the characters. In a state of divine spiritual revelation, he inscribed the holy characters on paper, plaques and amulets.

In describing his ability to manifest the Holy *Goho*, Gedatsu Kongo stated: “A circle, square, triangle, or anything; they are all the Holy *Goho* that the Supreme God of the Universe wrote. I am not writing the Holy *Goho*, but merely copying the characters that I see on the paper.”

#### Holy *Goho* Central to Gedatsu Study

Gedatsu Kongo discovered the Holy *Goho* in the late 1920s, just as he was establishing the Gedatsu Church in Japan. Thus, the Holy *Goho* became an intrinsic part of the Gedatsu teaching from its earliest days. Today, the Holy *Goho* is copied from the Founder’s original writing and printed on *Amacha kuyo* plaques, stupas and amulets, which we use in our homes and at church.

Shortly after discovering the Holy *Goho*, the Founder began to realize the amazing power and utility of this instrument in connecting the seen and unseen worlds, especially in being able to communicate with spiritual entities. Through early spiritualistic practices and experiences with the Holy *Goho*, the Founder began instructing his followers in the practice of *Amacha Kuyo* blessing and *Goho Shugyo*, meaning practice or training, as early as 1930.

*Goho Shugyo* is performed by meditating and holding the amulet of the Holy *Goho* between your palms, with eyes closed, in a prayerful posture before the altar. Through the power of the Holy *Goho*, the mysterious energies of spiritual forces are then manifest.



***Goho Shugyo* should be performed at the church in the presence of an experienced teacher or intermediary.**

When you perform *Goho Shugyo*, you should realize that you are holding a sacred instrument, a symbol of God or Universal Life itself. Therefore, you should put your analytical mind aside, entrusting all to the Universal God and the miraculous power vested in the Holy *Goho* through the Founder, Gedatsu Kongo. This total emersion of your will and mind to God is in itself critical to the effectiveness of the *Goho Shugyo* practice. With this attitude, the Holy *Goho* will guide you appropriately.

#### Training to Cultivate, Perfect Your Character

The basic objective of this practice is perfection of character. The practice enables you to cultivate your character by recognizing your negative traits, discarding your selfish thoughts and attitudes in life, and strengthening your volition, or will power.

This method of disciplining your mind and soul strengthens your intuitive faculties, enabling you to realize your true self and grasp the inner meaning and truth in all things.

*(Continued on back page)*



## JANUARY 2025 OFFERINGS

### **Northern California** Total: \$2,817

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, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa

#### Special Acknowledgments

K. Kitasoe	Happy New Year
J. Tanaka	Appreciation and gratitude for Happy New Year 2025
M/M J. Horner	New Year
M/M R. Reano	Appreciation and gratitude for New Year
M/M D. Ide	Happy New Year 2025 appreciation
J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service for Natsuko Furukawa
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for January "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for first service of the year
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for New Year Appreciation Service
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for 4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Appreciation Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for Appreciation Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for 2024 and hope for 2025

### **Southern California** Total: \$5,365

General: A. Dewitt, H. Allcoy, K. Fujii, M/M M. Hamada, M/M T. Hiram, F. Imuta, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, S. Kaku, A. Kojima, M/M T. Kojima, K. Kuritani, M/M K. Kuritani, L. Mahoney, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, M/M J. Peck, N. Takara, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood, M/M N. Furukawa, Fugetsu Confectionery

#### Special Acknowledgments

M/M K. Chinen	Burial service for Eisuke and Mieko Chinen
Ka. Kuritani	Appreciation for 2024
J. Mah	New Year appreciation
M/M K. Kuritani	New Year appreciation
M/M A. Shiroishi	New Year appreciation
M/M L. Muronaka	New Year appreciation
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude for New Year (\$500)
M/M T. Matsumoto	Old plaques appreciation
M/M G. Wood	"Never Forgotten" Service for Katsuyo Nagao
De. Shiroishi	New Year appreciation
M/M N. Chodor	New Year appreciation
M/M C. Morioka	New Year appreciation
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
V. Miyamoto	New Year appreciation
R. Wakasa	New Year appreciation
L. Hoeft	In memory of Mary
M/M K. Kuritani	In memory of Sumiko Tsujimura, Nobuko Tsujimura, and Frank Young
M/M P. Nakamura	One-year service for Mark Nakamura

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### **Online Donations:** Total: \$426.40

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

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

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, Mark Ishida, Reverend Takao Kojima,  
Mariko Locheo, Reverend Naoya Okano, Yuko Okano,  
Deacon Jo Ann Shiroishi, Pam Shaklan,  
Reverend Hisakazu Taki**

***(Sacred Practice – continued from page 6)***

Through sincere and continuous performance of *Goho Shugyo*, your outlook on life gradually changes, allowing you to enjoy and appreciate all things with deep faith and conviction, leading to your spiritual awakening.

Developing Spiritual Perception

*Goho Shugyo* practice also enables you to experience and comprehend the existence of the spiritual world, and how it significantly impacts your daily life. Through your heightened awareness of the relationship between the physical and spiritual worlds, you become aware of and appreciate the help and guidance given to you by your ancestors and guardian spirits.

Because the Holy *Goho* possesses an all-encompassing power, many spirits are attracted to the *Goho* and its penetrating ability to render purification to unrested souls. Therefore, when you meditate with the Holy *Goho*, you may experience the mysterious energies of spiritual forces. Most often, this consists of communication with ancestral spirits and/or unrested spirits of other entities.

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

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Because of this spiritual contact, it is important that the *Goho Shugyo* practice be performed at church in the presence of an experienced teacher or intermediary, who can correctly interpret these spiritual communications and instruct you appropriately. Also, during the performance of *Goho Shugyo*, *Amacha Kuyo* blessing is diligently performed to console spirits with appreciation and allow them to rest peacefully in the spiritual realm.

The regular practice of *Goho Shugyo* enables you to understand the true, total nature of yourself, amid the vibrations of the seen and unseen worlds in which you exist. When unrested spiritual conditions of your ancestors and others closely connected with you are understood – and subsequently purified and settled – through the power of the Holy *Goho*, your ultimate destiny appears before you. Your volition is strengthened. Your life unfolds harmoniously.

Such is the beauty, sacredness and power of the *Goho Shugyo* practice.

