



GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Those who do not truly understand
the taste of tears can never truly know
the value of laughter."*

Water that flows just by turning
on a faucet . . . connecting family
members through a simple phone
call . . . driving to the market to buy
groceries . . . receiving medical care
when we are sick. . . enjoying a meal
with the family . . .

Not even one of these common
everyday conveniences should be
taken for granted. Only through the
sacrifices and efforts of those who
came before us are we able to live
comfortably and happily each day in
our homes and communities.

JUNE 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	8	10:00 am	No Service
Tue	10	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	29	10:0 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service / Mother Kiyota Memorial Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	1	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	8	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	15	10:00 am	Appreciation and Father's Day Service
Sun	22	10:00 am	Cultural Event: "Kokedama – the Japanese Art of Moss Ball"
Thu	26	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom

JULY 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Fri	4		Church Closed (Independence Day)
Sun	6	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	8	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	13	10:00 am	No Service
Sun	27	10:0 am	Appreciation / Obon Service / Graduates Honored

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Fri	4		Church Closed (Independence Day)
Sun	6	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	13	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	20	10:00 am	Appreciation / Obon Service Graduates Honored
Thu	24	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	27	10:00 am	Cultural Event TBD

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	26	12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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June “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, June 1, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Mine Kino Hirose, Mark Alan Mullins, Motokichi Ide, Kinuyo Nakatani, Suyeko Hada Takemura, Mihoko Tanaka, Steven Tateishi, Jane Keiko Thorne, Isamu Yamada, Bettie Yamamura, and Masaru Yamamura.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, June 8, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Harry Hidejin Arakawa, Kimiko Hirano, Mitsuko Kaku, Masa Kikuta, Tsuchinojo Kimura, Edward Yutaka Kuritani, Kazumi Matsunami, Kameyoshi Michiuye, Manabu Mukai, Fusako Murakami, Phillip Nakamura, Robert Nakamura, Mary Anne Nolan, Ken Numata, Ai Okada, Hideyo Okada, Masakichi Okada, Yoshiko Mary Otera, Lawrence Sasano, Roy S. Shiba, Hidekichi Shiroishi, Tsuna Shiroishi, Yoshimasa Taninaka, Steven Tateishi, Hironobu George Terakawa, Ben Seiroku Toguchi, Carolyn Wong, June Tsuyoko Yamamisaka, and Russell Yamamisaka.**



Let’s Celebrate Our 2025 Graduates!

It’s time for our annual celebration of graduating students and their parents. The Los Angeles and Sacramento churches will be honoring graduates at their annual recognition programs in July.

If you have a student in the family who will be graduating this year from elementary, middle or high school, college, or graduate school, submit their name to be honored. Application forms (electronic and paper) are available from your branch office.

Completed forms are due by June 16.

Memorial Tower Enshrinements – Fall 2025

Enshrinements in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower are scheduled for the Fall Grand Festival on August 31. The price for enshrinement plaques is \$500. Applications for enshrinement will be accepted until June 15. Application forms are available at your church office.



L.A. Women’s Club Presents: “Discover *Kokedama*, the Japanese Art of Moss Ball”

- Join us at the Los Angeles Gedatsu Church on **Sunday, June 22, at 10 a.m.**
- Learn how to transform a live plant in a moss ball medium into a unique sculptural art form.
- Instructed by member **Janet Hirayama**
- Class fee of \$20 includes all basic materials.
- To reserve your spot, contact **Rev. Naoya Okano** at naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com or call / text him at (626) 233-2359.

Price Increases

- Hosankai Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund
The annual fee for this important membership fund will increase from \$600 to a minimum of \$900 up to \$1,200 or more, beginning in 2026.
- Manbu Kuyo Certificates
The price of certificates for this twice-a-year *Manbu Kuyo* ceremony in Japan will increase from \$2.50 to \$5.00, beginning this fall.

Fees for Hard-copy *Companion* Newsletter

Companion readers are encouraged to receive the newsletter for free via email. Fees are charged for hard copies: \$25/year for postal-mailed copies; \$10/year for copies picked up at the church; \$1 for single copies. To receive the newsletter via email or pay the annual fee, contact **Rev. Naoya Okano** at the L.A. Church at (626) 233-2359 or naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com.

Obituary

The L.A. Gedatsu Church mourns the passing of **Michael Etsuo Mizokami**, who died on March 23 at the age of 71. He is survived by his wife **Karen**; daughter **Megan**; sons **Sean** and **Nick**; two granddaughters; and siblings **Victor, Janis, Gwen, Martin** and **Bruce**.

Easter Fun for All Ages



Easter Sunday at the L.A. Church was a festive event for young and old. Sunday Schoolers decorated “Gifts of Gratitude” bags, before dashing out to hunt for 800 treat-filled Easter eggs. After a visit from Peter Rabbit (Grieben Campos), the congregation honored three members who celebrate a 90th birthday this year – Kiyoko Fujii, Fukuko Rico, and Naomi Takara – gifting each with a potted Easter lily plant. Members also received Gedatsu-logo key chains made by member Sandra Martinez. The fun festivities, underwritten by the Sunday School, concluded with a delicious potluck luncheon enjoyed by everyone.



Learning and Laughter: Members Share Tasty Japanese Recipes



As part of the monthly cultural events sponsored by the L.A. Women’s Club, a lively and fun hands-on cooking class was instructed by members Judy Hamamoto and Yoko Oishi. About 20 members and friends learned how to prepare traditional Japanese dishes: *chirashi* and *kimpira renkon*.

During the class, participants were divided into three groups – each group taking turns chopping the vegetables, stirring the rice, and cooking the *renkon* under the watchful eyes and skilled hands of chefs Judy and Yoko. The result was a delicious Japanese meal – and proud, confident new chefs, eager to prepare the dishes on their own at home.

Gedatsu Teaching 4 **By Seiken Okano (Gedatsu Kongo)** **Translation and Commentary by Rev. H. Taki**

We are heirs to an infinite ancestral heritage – including physical and spiritual attributes – which goes back generations to the beginning of time. I have said repeatedly that we are the extension of our ancestors. Our present status and circumstances are intrinsically related to this heritage. Thus, to eliminate the shortcomings of our status and circumstance, as well as the physical and spiritual faults of generations past, is quite impossible. Therefore, I recommend the Gedatsu path as the only means to fundamentally eradicate physical and spiritual ailments.

Throughout the vast period of generations of our ancestors' lives, countless positive and negative attributes were possessed. We are the heirs to these negative attributes, which manifest as physical ailments and mental illnesses. Not only are we impacted by these past faults, but as they are passed on to descendants, they are magnified. Therefore, you must absolve these negative attributes in this life and act immediately. Don't wait for tomorrow. There is no other way but to reform yourself. This is the first step in Gedatsu.

The inherited physical and spiritual faults are due to the vice of generations of ancestors. We should repent to God on behalf of ancestors to absolve their past faults, and with God's protection and guidance, rectify all transgressions. By receiving forgiveness to absolve all negativities, and by becoming pure and proper in mind and body, you enter the main path of Gedatsu.

Furthermore, I repeat: Humans must observe the human path, or the five principles of human virtues, which are integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity, and gratitude. But, because we humans pursue our innate instincts and accommodate our desires, we are prone to be egotistical. Should we follow this thinking, regardless of how we may clear up the past, we will once again revert to our former ways. Our efforts will be worthless. Therefore, I tell you to discard ego, namely all selfish desires, and return to human's original mission.

We have not only inherited infinite ancestral faults, we have also received infinite blessings from ancestors. While accepting the immeasurable blessings as they were bestowed, we have been unaware of gratitude. If you have felt a sense of appreciation for the blessings bestowed, it is a matter of how you should repay. In a nutshell, it is God's will to make a better society from this day forward.

How do we accomplish this? By reforming our own mind and heart. How do we do this? The first step is to have the family walk on the right path – then extend it to the village, town, county, state and the whole country. By doing so they may bear all the fruits of true co-existence and co-prosperity. We may then build a secure and strong nation. We must consider how each of us can improve ourselves, which includes the inherited physical and spiritual attributes. Furthermore, as stated before, we should perceive and realize the virtues and vices of past generations, absolve all faults, and strive for a new and bright future for our country.

Humans differ from other living things and animals. How far we can advance depends on our spirit and mind. It is unlimited, isn't it? However, there could be differences depending on the application of inherent intelligence and acquired knowledge.

Will those who believe to have intelligence definitely acquire more knowledge? As a matter of course, natural differences will be evident depending on individual works and efforts. Looking at it from a material standpoint, there are many cases where great inherited wealth was completely lost in one generation. Your success or failure depends on how you manage your inherent intelligence and acquired knowledge.

Therefore, I say that the Gedatsu teaching is the path to completely reform yourself. I earnestly ask you to cheerfully move forward along the right path according to the universal law. I have always stated, "Put forth effort and ask for nothing in return. Never forget to endeavor with sincerity in your occupation."

Furthermore, because most religious teachings are just like blank prescriptions, there are those who are healed and those who remain addicted. However, the Gedatsu teaching enables us to completely perceive and understand ourselves. That is, Gedatsu is the Universal Law, which is composed of self-reflection, self-renunciation, highest moral conduct, and the five principles of human virtues, which includes integrity, filial piety, benevolence, fidelity and gratitude.

Commentary by Reverend Taki:

In “Gedatsu Teaching 4, “Gedatsu Kongo explains the essential point for attaining true happiness.

First, he explains how we exist. We were born in the infinite stream of generations of ancestors from time immemorial. We all inherited our ancestors physically and spiritually. Gedatsu Kongo states: “We are the extension of our ancestors.”

“We” are the accumulation of all our ancestral heritage, both good and negative aspects. In this sense, we are pre-determined physically and spiritually by our ancestral inheritance. It is very hard for us to be aware of our negative aspects and to break our habitual way of life – what Gedatsu Kongo calls “family tradition.”

We may think that, if we are pre-conditioned by the family tradition, our corrective efforts are futile. But this is not true.

Gedatsu Kongo said that no matter what negativity we may have in the family tradition, we can free ourselves from it and transform any negative family tradition. This is the path of Gedatsu. We must realize the negative ancestral trend within ourselves and immediately practice self-reform. This self-realization and self-reform will absolutely dissolve any negative family traditions from the past. Thus, we can start a new life.

Gedatsu Kongo strongly believed that we all possess an inner divine self. This inner divine self urges us to be aware of our negativity within and reform ourselves. No matter what negativity we may have in the past, we should not give up hope. Believe in our inner divine self. Sincerely self-reflect on our past and try to reform ourselves. Then we will be able to attain true peace of mind and happiness. Gedatsu Kongo guaranteed it. Gedatsu is the path of hope and true happiness for everyone.

This pure self, however, is usually thickly covered by the so-called “karma” of the family, which prevents our divine self from revealing itself. We must absolve all negativity within ourselves by repenting to God. This is well explained in our Prayer Book: “For all the sinful deeds which I have committed in the past through greed, anger and ignorance by the actions of my body, speech and mind, I now most sincerely repent.”

Every day – through our bodily actions, speech and thoughts – we create our own life, our own karma, both good and bad. No matter our family background and karma, if we become aware of negativity within ourselves

and sincerely repent – and strongly resolve not to repeat it again – we can change the negative trend of the family and become a new individual. This is the meaning of repentance.

Actually, it may be very hard for us to repent this way because our thoughts and feelings are very egotistical. But, unless we become aware of our self-centeredness and reform it, we will never be able to change the negative trend of our family background.

Repentance to absolve the negative karma of the family is only the beginning of our Gedatsu practice.

As Gedatsu Kongo stated, we have not only inherited infinite hereditary faults, but we have also received infinite blessings. We are allowed to exist by receiving immeasurable blessings from ancestors, society, and all beings in the universe. When we truly understand this fact, we will naturally feel grateful for the blessings of all, and want to work for the betterment of society and people’s happiness. Reform your mind and heart, and have your family walk on a straight path. Then you should extend it to society, country and the world. Your daily practice of this will bring forth world peace. This is the Gedatsu path which Gedatsu Kongo urges us to live.

Gedatsu Kongo stated, “Put forth effort and ask for nothing in return. Don’t ever forget to endeavor with sincerity in your occupation.” These words teach us the importance of sincerity and effort. Trust God, and reflect on yourself in accordance with the Universal Law. You should then make a sincere effort in your activities. This is the path toward true happiness. In the last paragraph, Gedatsu Kongo stated, “because most religious teachings are like blank prescriptions, there are those who are healed and those who remain addicted.” I believe this statement tells us that religious faith and practice should not be separated from ourselves. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of “self-cognizance,” “self-reflection,” “self-renunciation,” “self-reform,” “self-awareness,” and “self-realization.” That is, religion is not in the doctrine. It should be practiced in our daily lives. This is the most important point of our Gedatsu study and practice.



A Spiritual Journey of Self-Realization

By Senior Reverend Akira Sebe



I would like to share the story of how Noguchi Sensei's spiritual journey of self-realization healed his body of Stage 4 esophageal cancer. It is a remarkable story of how, at age 79, he currently lives cancer-free, despite being diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer at the age of 59.

Noguchi Sensei is a lay minister of the Kobe Gedatsu Church in Japan. Kobe is the largest branch of Gedatsu, with eight preschools, a kindergarten, two assisted senior living facilities and 500 employees. Together, Noguchi Sensei and Funahashi Sensei are the spiritual leaders of the branch and help many members.

Vital Gedatsu Lessons

Noguchi-san has been a follower of the Gedatsu teaching since he was in his 20s, having been inspired by his mother, who was a devout follower. He was very fortunate to have studied with Katsuko Sensei, who studied directly with Gedatsu Kongo in the 1930's. He experienced firsthand two of her teachings when he developed metastatic cancer when he was only 59 years old. Katsuko Sensei had always told Gedatsu members "Everything that happens to you is good for you" (in Japanese, "*Nandemo, nattakotoga iikoto nandayo*") and "When you change your soul, then your body changes."

When Noguchi-san first learned that he had cancer of the esophagus and that it had spread to his lymph nodes, he was distraught, and his mind filled with a lot of negative thoughts and emotions.

Naturally, he felt shock, confusion, denial, anger, and despair. But after a while, he realized that none of those feelings was going to help his situation, and he instead began saying prayers of appreciation for his life. He traveled 5.5 hours to Saitama from Kobe to also perform *omairi*.

During one of his *omairi* rounds, he received a message requesting he return often, so he committed himself to making monthly five-hour roundtrips to *Goreichi* in Saitama while continuing with his daily prayers at home. He was still working and was weak and sickened by the cancer, so this was a great sacrifice of time and energy for him. His physician and mother did not agree with his decision. However, during one of his prayers, he received divine guidance.

Divine Guidance

Noguchi-san's profession was as an architect, having received his AIA certification after many years of study. He founded his own architectural firm in Kobe and ran a successful business. However, occasionally he had to deal with dissatisfied clients, which is the nature of any business. Perhaps they didn't like his designs or disagreed with the contract terms or cost, etc. When such conflicts arose, Noguchi-san tended to think he was in the right and never thought to apologize to the customer. However, during one of his prayer sessions, he received spiritual instruction to change his attitude and apologize to his clients and thank them for pointing out why they were unhappy. He gradually realized that when he changed his attitude, his clients' attitudes changed to the positive and his relationships improved for the better. This self-realization that his ego caused negativity in his relationships was humbling.

Later on, Noguchi-san learned that the cancer had further spread from his esophagus and lymph nodes to his colon. The oncologist told him that surgery was futile. He could not depend on medical science to help his fatal condition. Despite this sobering news, he continued without fail to express his thankfulness to his clients, regardless of whether he agreed with them or not, to travel many hours back and forth to Saitama to perform *omairi*, to sincerely help the Kobe members and to offer prayers of appreciation for being alive, despite his illness. Unknowingly, his efforts had the collective effect of humbling him and lessening his ego, one day at a time.

(Continued on back page)

APRIL 2025 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$7,571

General Donations: A. Sebe, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, J. Kaku, M/M J. Horner, Ka. Kuritani, No Name (\$851), M/M P. Tateishi, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. Kaku, S. Matsumoto, S. Taketa, Y. /C. Oishi

Special Acknowledgments

Spring Grand Festival M/M N. Okano, M/M T. Kojima, C. Tsujimura, M/M C. Morioka, M/M H. Tsujimura, M. Fukushima, M/M S. Arase, M. Okada, J. Tanaka, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M S. Shaklan, T. Okimura, V./S. Matsuura, M/M T. Matsumoto, S. Taketa, R. Ito, Rev. Kizaki, A. Tsujimura, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Mah (\$600), M/M D. Tsuboi (\$500), *Gedatsu-kai* Japan (\$1,000)

J. Tanaka "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service for Masashi Russell Ota and Henry Toshio Tateishi

M/M D. Ide "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Mas Ota

M/M D. Tsuboi "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service, with gratitude

Y./C. Oishi Spring Festival appreciation – *Gochi* Sanctuary

K. Ota-Schubert "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation

M/M J. Horner *Saitogoma* Service appreciation

Southern California Total: \$5,200

General: M/M N. Chodor, A. DeWitt, J. Hamamoto, Je. Hamamoto, B. Hamamoto, G. Hass, M/M T. Hiram, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, M/M T. Kojima, M/M K. Kuritani, I. Long, M/M D. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, Anonymous, M/M V. Mizokami, T. Murakami, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okimura, A. Rico, M/M A. Shiroishi, De. Shiroishi, D. Shiroishi, N. Takara, L. Young

Special Acknowledgments

M/M Ho. Tsujimura In memory of Henry Tsujimura, Shigeno Tomita, Laly Padilla, and Randy Kuritani.

M/M S. Shiroishi "Never Forgotten" for Margaret Nakamura and relatives

J. Shiroishi "Never Forgotten" for Pat Shiroishi

Mahoney/Kaku Families "Never Forgotten" for Thomas Mahoney

T. Yamada Appreciation for old plaques

J. Reid "Never Forgotten" Service for Tomoyo Ogura

D. Mukai Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo

T. Ishida Spring Grand Festival

M/M T. Hiram Spring Festival

Do. Shiroishi Appreciation for Easter Service

Barthel Family With sincere gratitude and appreciation 2025

J. Ito April Easter Service

G. Horita Funeral service for Keiko Horita (\$500)

Online Donations: Total: \$776

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

Special Acknowledgments

J. Reid "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service in memory of Tomoyo Ogura

A. Kishida Appreciation for Spring Grand Festival

HELP WANTED



Our Gedatsu Church faces a dire financial situation. Our current average monthly income of \$6,200 – coming mainly from donations – falls short of average monthly expenses of \$11,300. The resulting deficit of \$5,100 continues to grow.

Members can help. Recently, dozens of trees and shrubs at the L.A. Church needed trimming, but other expenses had priority. Member Arlene Tsujimura offered to pay for a professional tree-trimming service. (See before/after photos of trimmed parkway trees.) The church appreciates Arlene's generous financial assistance.

Please consider increasing your donations to help our church pay its monthly operating expenses, so it can continue its operations, services, and programs.



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(Self-realization Journey – continued from page 6)

Noguchi-san admits he had to face his own mortality and undergo great suffering in order to attain a deep level of humility and gratitude. He shared that he is so grateful for the cancer because it caused him to reflect and develop absolute gratitude for his life. How? First, he gave up any control he thought he had over his life. He came to realize that the energy of the Universal Life Force gave him life, and that this energy is not his to control, own or possess. Realizing this energy was granted to him, without condition, his appreciation for being alive, and for Gedatsu Kongo, naturally deepened. Unknowingly, his ego had contradicted a deeper truth of the reality of life; namely, that life itself is gifted to us by the Universal Life Force and cannot and should never be taken for granted.

Although this realization was only intellectual at first, he gradually removed all personal thoughts, worry, criticisms, questions, etc., and accepted this reality in his *soul*. He emphasized that developing a deep feeling of gratitude for the Universal Life Force was pivotal in his spiritual journey. His self-realizations *purified* his soul, and he experienced firsthand what Katsuko Sensei had always told the Kobe membership: *when you change your soul, your body changes*.

Releasing Ego Unleashes Inner Divine Energy

In replacing all human thought and ego with deep gratitude, the barrier between his spirit and the Universal Life Force disappeared. His body healed, without the need for surgery, medicine or human intervention. Why? Because purifying his soul released him from all egoistic thoughts and *unleashed* the divine energy within him – the pure, unconditional love granted to him by the Universal Life Force, a boundless energy that is capable of healing all things.

This level of deep self-realization is not experienced by the average person, particularly if you are healthy and illness-free. But let's learn from Noguchi Sensei's experience. By understanding that the life energy force that gave us life is sacred, we will naturally feel more appreciative of *being alive*. Such a realization will lead to a deeper connection to the Universal Life Force within and outside of ourselves. We will then receive its many blessings and live a blissful life.

"When you change your soul, your body changes."
In Japanese: *"Tamashii ga kawa reba, karada ga kawaru."*

Thank you to Pauline Tomita for her editorial assistance on this story.

