



GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"The family is religion.
A husband and wife enter
a life of 'gassho'
– the first step to religion."*

"Gassho" means putting one's hands together in prayer. While this includes praying to God and ancestors, Gedatsu teaches us another, deeper meaning of this word.

"Gassho" also means unification – adjusting ourselves to our spouse and family members, accommodating ourselves to others, aligning ourselves with our job and fellow workers, and synchronizing our mind and spirit with the movement of the universe.

When we sincerely continue on this path of "gassho," harmony surrounds us, and the Gedatsu world – filled with true happiness – naturally unfolds before us.

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 / <i>Obon</i> Service / Graduates Honored

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Fri	4	Church Closed (Independence Day)
Sun	6 10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	13 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	20 10:00 am	Appreciation / <i>Obon</i> Service Graduates Honored
Thu	24 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	27 10:00 am	Floral Lei-making Class

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	26 12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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AUGUST 2025

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10	No Service
Tue	12 7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	24 10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Benzaiten</i> Service
Sun	31 9:30 am	Fall Grand Festival

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3 10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	10 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	17 10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Benzaiten</i> Service
Thu	28 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	24 10:00 am	Japanese Cooking Class
Sun	31 9:30 am	Fall Grand Festival in Sacramento

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	23 12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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July “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, July 6, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Yukio Jim Ide, Tsuma Kino, Kazue Ando Kotabe, Miyoko Nakamura, Steven Ikuzo Nakatani, Alan Yoneo Oshima, Yukie Ota, Shizu Sebe, Charlie Zenzo Tagawa, Keichi Takemura, Steve Morio Taketa, Keisuke Tateishi, Susie Setsuko Tateishi, Yukio Tateishi, Kimiko Yomogida, Tsuyako Yuno, Yukie Yuno, and Yone Yuno.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, July 13, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Hideko Arakawa, Iku Arakawa, Masao Arakawa, Nathan Capross, Haruko Chinen, Kathryn Christina Howe, Tomoko Imai, Katsue Jon Inouye, Louis Kiyoshi Ito, Yoshino Kawamura, Maria Antonia Lechuga, Hiroko Murakami, Stanley Muronaka, Yasoji Nagahama, Tomoyoshi Naito, Kyoko Nakaguchi, Shigeko Nakamura, Helen Nakano, Eddie Kinya Ogura, Nancy Yoshie Ogura, Hiroko Omiya, Setsu Sakuma, Malayka Jane Sexton, Thomas Gray Sexton, Otomatsu Shiba, Yukio Shimada, Michiye Shimohira, Nobuyoshi Shimohira, Shigeko Sugata, Yoshinori Takamine, Genpachi Tanji, Riichi Tomita, Kazuma Toyama, Rudy Koichiro Tsujimura, and Yoko Tsujimura.**



Fall Grand Festival Sunday, August 31 – 9:30 a.m. Gedatsu Spiritual Center, Sacramento

Program I – Festival Service

Social Hall or outdoors, weather permitting

Program II – Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower
Enshrinement Ceremony

Program III – *Saito Goma* Fire Ceremony

- **Order your Saito Goma plaques by August 17.** Price per plaque is \$5. Application form is in this newsletter and at your local church.
- **Reserve a lunch for Festival Sunday.** Lunches (hot/chili dogs, chips, water) will be available for \$10 per person. Contact your local church to reserve a lunch.

L.A. Women’s Club presents:



Floral Lei-making Class

- Learn the art of making fresh floral leis.
- At the **L.A. Church on Sunday, July 27, at 10 a.m.**
- Class is instructed by **Karen Nakamura.**
- Class is free. Fee is charged for materials.
- Donations are appreciated.
- To reserve a space, contact **Rev. Okano** at (626) 288-1212 or (626) 233-2359 or naoya.gedatsu@gmail.com



Mark your calendars for the
August 24 Japanese Cooking Class:
“How to Make Soba Salad with Special Dressing”



Mothers Celebrated with Tokens of Love and Appreciation



The L.A. Church welcomed members and friends to its Mother’s Day service and luncheon. Moms and ladies were gifted with long-stem roses, toothbrush holders, and an assortment of beauty and personal care toiletries.

Pictured above, front row, left to right: Jo Ann Shiroishi, Ann Pang, Arlene Tsujimura, Kris Kuritani (with Penny), Jodi Morioka (with Makena), Camille Kuritani. Second row, left to right: Judy Hamamoto, Kathryn Pang, Kristen Pang, Anna Rico, Sachiyo Matsumoto, Michiye Takahashi, Ikuko Kuritani. Third row, left to right: Mariko Locheo, Marilyn Nakamura, Jo Ann Kaku, Toyoko Murakami, Marian Mizokami, Fukuko Rico, Kiyoko Fujii. Back rows, left to right: Carole Tsujimura, Pam Shalkan, Machiko Masuda, Janet Hirayama, Uzuko Shiroishi, Julie Mah, Kari Kuritani, Judy Okimura, Wendy Young, Naomi Takara, Yuko Okano, Annie DeWitt, Pauline Muronaka, Akemi Wood, Yoko Oishi, Sherrie Chodor, Diana Mukai.



The congregation of the Sacramento Spiritual Center honored mothers who attended the Mother’s Day service. Moms and ladies were presented with tulip flowers and gift bags.

Pictured at left, front row, left to right: Reiko Ide, Judy Tsuboi, and Ritsuko Nakatani. Back row, left to right: Sally McSwain, Sachi, Fukushima, Pauline Tomita, Lily Hirai, and Nancy Horner.



Shakyo Students Deepen their Writing Meditation



Shakyo classes continue at the L.A. Church for ongoing and new participants. *Shakyo* is the writing of the Heart Sutra, or *Hannya Shingyo*, with Japanese calligraphy, using traditional brush and ink. Many participants were introduced to *Shakyo* earlier this year and are improving their proficiency in tracing the sacred Japanese characters.

“While we will continue to offer this class on an ongoing basis, we encourage students to practice *Shakyo* daily at home, like *Hiho* and *Ajikan* meditation,” says Rev. Naoya.

A Mother's Day Message

Sermon by Sr. Reverend Akira Sebe
Sacramento Spiritual Center

This is my story. My father died the same year that I was born, so I never knew him nor knowingly received his love. Because my mother, Sumiko, did not feel she could provide the life she wanted for me, she asked her sister, Bishop Kishida's wife, if they would raise me. My mother remarried when I was 2 1/2 years old and had two more children. I lived in the Kishida household and was raised by my grandmother, my mom's mother.

Throughout my childhood, I never felt loved and grew up to be a lonely, sad young adult. Bishop Kishida always reminded me that my mother loved me, but my feelings of loneliness and sadness were so strong, it took me a long time to believe him. Bishop enveloped me with unconditional love, a love so strong that it shaped who I am today.

I still remember clearly an incident when I was about 17 years old. Bishop had just returned from the U.S., so we hadn't seen each other for a while. He looked at me and said, "*Kawaisoo na yatsu da na,*" which in English means, "I feel so sorry for you, you are such an unhappy child." The love and compassion he showed me in that moment was extraordinary. I hoped that perhaps if I accompanied him to the U.S., my fate might change. So when I was about 20 years old, I moved to America.

Bishop Kishida cared about me so much that gradually my feelings of low self-esteem and sadness gradually lifted. By the time I was in my late 20s, I had slowly started to accept that perhaps my mother did love me. My visits back to Japan were infrequent – perhaps every 3 to 5 years. I would always visit my mom during these return trips, but during those visits, my mom never showed any outward displays of affection towards me. That was to be expected, however, because such expressions of love were not traditional in Japanese culture. However, when I visited my mom when I was in my late 20's, I, for the first time, was able to notice the signs of her love.

One morning, as I prepared to leave Tokyo for Kyoto, my mom expressed her wish to accompany me to the train station to see me off. Although it wasn't necessary, she insisted on coming with me. At that moment, I was able to understand that this was my mom's way of showing her love for me. It was very subtle, but I was able to appreciate and acknowledge her love, which I had been unable to do when I was younger. Then, with each subsequent visit to Japan, I came to realize and gradually believe in her love for me. I never blamed my mom for asking the Kishida family to raise me, but perhaps deep down within myself, I had felt abandoned.

About 10 years ago, my mom passed away, and unfortunately, I wasn't able to attend her funeral due to a commitment I had to the church here. Rev. Sugimoto, who lives in Japan, offered to attend the funeral, despite not having ever met my mom. What she shared with me afterwards was very surprising.

Apparently, at my mother's funeral, a picture of her was displayed. Sugimoto Sensei said that when she saw the picture, she felt my mom's presence and my mom expressed to her how deeply she loved me. She asked Sugimoto Sensei to please convey her feelings to me. I was so touched to hear this from Sugimoto Sensei and to learn how much my mom loved me. I was so grateful that my own loneliness and sadness had lifted so that I could, without question, accept her love unconditionally.

I am reminded of my mother's love even by church members. I recall speaking to one of the members, who was familiar with my childhood upbringing. She asked me whether I understood the great sacrifice my mother made in asking another family to raise me. As a mother herself, she understood how difficult it was for my mom to make such a decision. My mom loved me but chose to give me up so that I might have a better life. This must have been extremely hard for her, and when I thought about it, I agreed that it was truly an act of unconditional love. At the time, I could not have realized or believed this, but I have come to understand her decision was rooted in her deep love and concern for me.

(Continued on page 5)

(Mother's Day Message – continued from page 4)

I have been so fortunate to be able to change my karma of loneliness and sadness to that of deep happiness and contentment. I owe this to my mother and father, whose deep unconditional love I have come to realize and accept. On Mother's Day, I hope you will each recognize, deeply appreciate and feel the love your mom has for you. Despite any circumstances that may lead you to question your mother's love for you, you must believe in it sincerely for your own happiness. If you have any doubts, please take this opportunity on this Mother's Day to begin with feelings anew. Despite whatever difficulties or disbelief you have in your parents' love for you, believe their love is absolute.

Please learn from my experience. I am sharing this private study with you in the hope that my message can help you resolve any doubts or misgivings you may harbor towards either parent. If this is difficult for you, please ask any one of the Gedatsu *senseis* or leaders of the church to guide you. Because once you realize and sincerely accept your mother and father's love within your heart, you will experience the deep happiness and contentment that I have. This is what I wish for all of you.



Afterword

Sacramento member **Dennis Tsuboi** reported that Reverend Sebe's Mother's Day sermon was delivered by **Pauline Tomita**, who helped Rev. Sebe with the English translation of his sermon. Dennis writes: "The congregation was particularly moved by Reverend Sebe's sermon, which was very personal and insightful about his complicated relationship with his mother. After the sermon, Rev. Sebe added more details about the differences in American and Japanese culture in regard to how affection is shown by actions and words. Also, Pauline and **Sachi Fukushima** shared their experiences. All agreed that Gedatsu teachings greatly assist in the resolution of their issues."

"Correcting Our Mental Habits"

Sermon by **Reverend Takao Kojima**

Los Angeles Gedatsu Church

My mother passed away about 20 years ago. As long as I can remember, I thought I wasn't a very good son because I never did anything special for her on Mother's Day while she was alive. However, last November, I had the honor of helping to enshrine my mother's spirit in the Gedatsu Kongo Memorial Tower in Kyoto. With this gesture, I hope I have made up for the neglect I showed on past Mother's Days.

Before going into today's main topic, I would like to share a somewhat embarrassing personal experience I recently had.

I failed the DMV driving test – twice in a row. I went into the first test without any preparation. I underestimated the difficulty of the test and was overly confident. You can call this "confidence without foundation."



When I finished the test, I thought I had done okay, but the result was not what I expected. I failed. I couldn't accept the failure and tried to find excuses, even thinking that the examiner was too strict with me.

On the way home from the DMV, Rev. Naoya, who kindly accompanied me, said "Rev. Kojima, you may want to reflect and review how you should drive in California." But I couldn't fully accept his advice. Sorry, Rev. Naoya.

Then, the second attempt. Once again, I took the test without any real self-reflection from my first failure – still believing I could pass easily. But again, I failed. I was shocked and very disappointed, especially after Rev. Naoya told me that most people usually pass on their second attempt.

(Continued on page 6)

(Mental Habits – continued from page 5)

So, after two consecutive failures, I finally calmed down and began to look for the true reason for the failures. I decided to approach the situation based on the Gedatsu teaching.

I realized that this must be a valuable lesson from God: I needed to develop self-awareness and improve myself through self-reflection.



So, when I looked from the Gedatsu viewpoint, two things came to mind. First, I had unconsciously developed bad driving habits over many years. Second, I was certain I couldn't fail such a simple test, given my long driving history. That belief came from arrogance – arrogance that, even at my age, still exists deep inside my heart. I want to eliminate this negative mindset, but I sense how difficult it will be to do so.

Looking back, I realized something important. If I had passed the driving test on the first trial, I probably would have kept driving with the same overconfident manner. That might have led to a serious accident. Moreover, I would have gone through everyday life carrying that arrogant mindset without even realizing it. It's terrible, isn't it?!

Gedatsu Kongo said, "Everyone, more or less, has mental habits. The Gedatsu teaching is the path to correct our mental habits." He then continued, "This kind of habit is not something that can be easily fixed just by receiving advice from others. It can only be corrected through self-awareness – by each individual."

In my case, I came to realize one such negative mental habit through the harsh experience of failing the test, not once but twice. That painful experience – and believe me, it really was painful – helped me become aware of something I might not have noticed on my own. Once again, I feel this must be a lesson from God and need to make every effort to correct it.

So, what should we do to recognize and understand our own mental habits?

A great clue is found in the words of **Kizaki Sensei's** sermon at the Spring Festival. He said, "Gedatsu is not the teaching in which others bring happiness to you. Rather, it is a teaching in which you put in your own effort to bring happiness and receive blessings by uniting your mind with God."

I interpret Kizaki Sensei's words in line with Gedatsu Kongo's teaching: "Gedatsu is the teaching to correct the mental habits we each possess." In order to correct our mental habits, we must first claim ownership for them. This is self-awareness. This isn't something others can simply suggest or fix for us.

So, the question is: How can we recognize our own mental habits?

Among the many things that Gedatsu Kongo left for us is the powerful practice of Holy *Hiho* Meditation.

Due to time constraints, I won't go into the details of *Hiho* Meditation today. But I'd like to emphasize this: through Holy *Hiho* Meditation, your mindset, which is influenced by mental habits and ego-centered thinking, can gradually be re-aligned with the Law of Universe and the Law of Nature.



At our church, we hold Holy *Hiho* Meditation sessions on the first Sunday of each month. I encourage you to join and experience Holy *Hiho* Meditation if you have not done so.

Today, I tried to explain "mental habits." I hope this will be helpful in your journey of learning the teachings of Gedatsu.



MAY 2025 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,816

General Donations: J. Tanaka, A. Sebe, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, K. Touchi, L. Tanaka, M. Fukushima, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, S. McSwain, S. Taketa

Special Acknowledgments

A. Sebe	Appreciation
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude, "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service for Shigeno Tateishi
M/M M. Sunahara	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service for Masao Taketa and Kenneth Taketa
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation and gratitude for <i>Joen no Gi</i> , Appreciation & Mother's Day Service
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude for Appreciation & Mother's Day Service
M/M P. Young	Spring Festival appreciation
M/M D. Ide	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service appreciation in memory of Buster Ide and Uncle Ben Ide
A. Sebe	Air-quality test donation
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude monthly donation

Southern California Total: \$4,810

General: M/M K. Chinen, M/M N. Chodor, A. DeWitt, K. Fujii, M/M T. Hirami, T. Ishida, J. Kaku, S. Kaku, M. Kimura, M/M T. Kojima, M/M K. Kuritani, I. Long, M/M D. Mah, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M B. Mizokami, M/M V. Mizokami, M/M S. Mukai, T. Murakami, P. Muronaka, M. Nakamura, Y. Oishi, M/M N. Okano, T. Okano, T. Okimura, M/M S. Shaklan, De. Shiroishi, Do. Shiroishi, N. Takara, A. Tsujimura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M G. Wood.

Special Acknowledgments

R. Wakasa	In memory of Jane Wakasa (\$500)
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	In memory of Yozo Tsujimura, Hiroishi Yamamisaka, John Kuritani, June Morioka
M/M C. Morioka	In memory of Yozo Tsujimura, Hiroishi Yamamisaka, June Morioka
M/M Ken Kuritani	In memory of Yozo Tsujimura, Hiroishi Yamamisaka, John Kuritani, June Morioka
M/M S. Shiroishi	In memory of Shizuyo Nakamura
M/M S. Mukai	"Never forgotten" Service for Sabuki Akiyoshi
M/M H. Hass	In memory of Michael Mizokami
T. Matsumoto	"Never Forgotten" Service for Sumako Matsumoto and Hitomi Nakaguchi
M/M G. Wood	"Never Forgotten" Service for Tameharu Nagao
K. Nakamura	"Never Forgotten"
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	Birth of great granddaughter
M/M Ken Kuritani	Ken's 80 th birthday
A. Tsujimura	Special donation for church improvement

Online Donations: Total: \$526

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

Special Acknowledgments

M/M A. Akashi	Belated appreciation for Spring Festival
M/M A. Akashi	Mother's Day Service appreciation

*Note: Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+.
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Old Plaque-burning Ceremony



In May, members of the Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento performed the annual *Joen-no-gi* Plaque-burning Service on the fire ceremony site of the *Goreichi* grounds.

Senior Reverend Akira Sebe and Dave Ide officiated the service. Scott Taketa and John Horner expertly lit and maintained the fire.

Old holy tea wooden plaques, holy paper plaques, and other sacred items that were returned by Gedatsu members during the year were consumed in the fire, as the congregation offered prayers of appreciation and holy tea blessing.