



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2020
SPRING
QUARTERLY
REPORT

LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER



Dear Friends,

This is a time of struggle and difficulty for many. But let us remember that while COVID-19 has terrible costs, it is also helping with some of the crises created by the human mind. These crises are far more severe than the coronavirus. For example, the climate crisis threatens billions more people, and our response to the virus is slowing global warming. It might help us focus on the long-term resilience of our civilization and the preservation of life on earth.

Whether we are concerned about the most vulnerable people, the human family as a whole, or all living things, we can thank COVID-19 for its life-saving power over us. This pandemic has done what our will and intelligence have not: slowed our destruction of life on earth. It has brought us to give up our busy lives and frenetic dreams. Our busy lives and frenetic dreams have killed many people, more than this virus, and if we don't stop, they will kill billions more. This is hard for us to face, and this crisis has helped us to slow down and change our lives.

For the most vulnerable people on earth, the climate crisis is a far more serious threat. If we are concerned about the most vulnerable, we can appreciate the benefit of this virus.

For humanity as a whole, the climate crisis is a far more serious threat. If we are concerned about all people, we can appreciate the benefit of this virus.

This virus impacts only one species, whereas the climate crisis impacts all species. If we are concerned about life, we can appreciate the benefit of this virus.

Dare we aspire to something better than this? Yes, we do.

We aspire to something that can stop us in our tracks, uproot our lives, and make us willing to sacrifice our economy, without causing death.

We aspire to something that can stop us in our tracks, uproot our lives, and make us willing to sacrifice our economy, that brings us to life.

We aspire to something that makes us change our daily lives to benefit the world, act for something larger than ourselves, and collectively work to serve everyone, without causing isolation.

We aspire to something that makes us change our daily lives to benefit the world, act for something larger than ourselves, and collectively work to serve everyone, that brings us together in community.

We aspire to something that makes us doubt our ordinary patterns, enter the unknown to find a new way, and go through hardship—even demand that we be forced to go through hardship!—without causing suffering.

We aspire to something that makes us doubt our ordinary patterns, enter the unknown to find a new way, and go through hardship—even demand that we be forced to go through hardship!—that brings us happiness leading to wisdom.



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What is the *something* with these marvelous qualities? It is simply this spiritual path. This path does all the good the virus does, and more, but none of the bad. And it begins with the willingness to see that our own minds, our own choices, can damage the world more than any sickness. It begins with the willingness to see that our own minds, our own choices, can benefit the world more than any sickness.

Therefore, if we are willing to give ourselves to health recommendations regarding the virus, we should give ourselves even more fully to this utterly miraculous path. And right now, today, we should take steps on three levels: individual, local, and global.

Individually, we should remain sane. This isn't easy right now, since many people are going insane together. Insanity is even more contagious than the virus, but sanity is contagious, too. The best way to regain our sanity is to sit down, feel body sensations, and stop thinking. Do not spend more than 30 minutes a day online learning about the coronavirus. Put that time and more (at least an hour a day) into sitting still and feeling how you feel **without thinking about it or anything else.**

Locally, we should move into a small community of trustworthy people. This means we can disagree without leaving. It is wonderful to live here at MAPLE with a group of wonderful people when others are so isolated that a video conference starts to seem like a medium for friendship. We can care for each other, learn from each other, and protect each other, in this time of unpredictable crises. **Begin the process of moving here today, especially if you're older.**

Globally, we should use this crisis as a template for our responses to the far more serious threats caused by the human mind. We have now proven that we are willing and able to overthrow our society when lives are in danger. While the challenges regarding the crises of the human mind are greater than COVID-19, the risks are greater still, and the damage already done is greater than the damage this virus will do. This crisis is an opportunity to save the world from even greater crises, and this begins with forming alliances for the benefit of all living things. **Take this momentum and revolutionize our world.**

May all be well.

Soryu Forall
Founder

LETTER FROM PETER PARK



Dear Community,

As you read this, I will be sitting in a solitary cabin in the woods surrounding the Monastic Academy, perhaps watching the snow fall as the birds sing. After two years as Executive Director and teacher at MAPLE I am taking the opportunity to dedicate two and a half months to realizing what has yet to be realized. All three of our solitary retreat cabins are in use thanks to the awakening practice of senior residents, the responsibility practice of our residents and apprentices, Soryu's dedication as teacher and Director, and, of course, your generosity. Your support makes the work we do here possible, and the fruits of our work are yours to share. We do not take this for granted—we are deeply aware of how easily and quickly the circumstances around our financial stability can change, especially in these uncertain times.

For the first time in our history, our community has matured to the point of moving forward as a unified front. We see the world in severe crisis. If not us, then who shall face it? The root of the problem that threatens life on earth takes seed in what the Daoists call the “clever, scheming, disconnected human mind” (clever being a pejorative here). We are working to solve the underlying, self-centered tendency that creates this problem.

This first quarter also marked our greatest integration of awakening and responsibility yet. We did our first intensive work retreat, completing a number of long-standing projects and implementing systems to improve our organizational effectiveness. We have updated our daily schedule to include individual and group study of spiritual texts and we have extended our program offerings to include a full-spectrum orientation curriculum for apprentices and residents. This curriculum has been in the making for over two years and our first test run was a huge success. Thanks to the striving of those at MAPLE and the ongoing gifts of our greater community, our resident numbers have doubled and our apprenticeship program has soared over the past year.

It is your support that has allowed us to continue to grow and mature in these ways, and the fruits of these endeavors are truly blooming after five difficult years in our evolution as an organization. We have learned time and time again the precious nature of this community and the support it offers to each and every one of us. I'm especially excited about our growing Lowell community as the MAPLE Village takes root. Please know: we want you here, close enough to directly support and be supported by our work together in this world as we live out each day. I can say from experience that through the joys and challenges at MAPLE the friendships forged have been an immeasurable gift to me.

In this time of crisis let the necessity of a training such as ours remain a bright light in the world. We are diligently and urgently working to bring greater wisdom and love into each of our actions, and striving to live in a way that creates a sustainable future for this planet. This really matters.

In friendship,

Peter Park
Executive Director



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OAK (BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA)

OAK has had an exciting first quarter. We now have five apprentices and we have ramped up our residential program with the goal of training people to engage in pastoral care in their communities. Our Saturday events are gaining momentum as attendance becomes more regular. This growing sense of community is very exciting and people are making connections that will impact the course of their lives.

We have continued to explore how to engage with our sangha of tech professionals and influential people in the south bay. This quarter we held lunches and discussions with members of the community and explored possibilities for gathering to discuss the Dharma together. We feel a sense of urgency around further connecting with this community. Oddly enough, the recent shelter-in-place order may make it easier to do this remotely.

One of our apprentices has been doing work in the domain of artificial intelligence (AI) safety research. AI safety is crucial to understanding the risks of advanced and generally intelligent AI, a technology that could be catastrophic for humanity in the mid-term future. Our monastic environment has proven itself conducive to this kind of work, and we are excited to explore the possibilities this illuminates for OAK's future.

Many of our plans have been thrown off by the COVID-19 pandemic; the SF Bay Area has declared a shelter-in-place order which bans gatherings and non-essential travel for at least six weeks and likely longer. During this time our focus is on training current residents and apprentices and creating virtual events to connect with the community. We are also exploring how to meet this unprecedented crisis and considering offering emotional support calls or volunteering in hospitals to be with the sick and dying. We expect this coming year will be very challenging for each of us and all of us. We depend on our practice to carry us through it.





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FINANCIALS

We are in a period of economic uncertainty. Fewer people are making contributions to not-for-profits and we need to adapt. Even though we are in difficult financial shape overall, thanks to the generosity of one couple who have chosen to move into our village we can report a positive financial quarter.

Last week Richard and Renee Dee sent \$250,000 consisting of an unrestricted gift of \$200,000 and an additional \$50,000 toward a new home in our village. This makes our future, and theirs, brighter and more joyful. It is more important than ever before to bring forth an alternative to the mainstream culture and to be part of a safe and trustworthy community. Their clarity on this front has offset the downturn in other sources of income.

Income from guest visits this quarter dropped to \$17,715, as shown in the table below, from \$27,833 last year. This was \$14,785, or 45% lower than the \$32,500 we projected. We do not know when this will return, much less surpass, our income in previous years. Other gifts accounted for \$45,721, which was \$6,000 lower than our first quarter last year. Again, we don't know when this will return to previous levels. Furthermore, our ability to hold future retreats remains unknown due to the current pandemic. We do have some good news—OAK was awarded a \$15,000 grant from the Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism. This brings us to a total \$314,299 income and \$113,779 expenses for the quarter. MAPLE raised \$296,848 and spent \$82,112, and OAK raised \$17,451 and spent \$31,667.

In response to these trends we are emphasizing the importance of the village as a way to overcome our financial hurdles and fulfill its promise as a true gift to our community. The income from the village will allow us to grow and the community will be a source of stability and connection in this unstable world.

Though much of the world has needed to suspend their work, our work never ceases. Bringing forth a new culture that can handle the escalating crises of the world is our mission and we gladly dedicate our lives to it. We strive each day to create a harmonious culture that cares for all life and we hope you will join us by moving here.



1ST QUARTER (UNAUDITED)

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$17,715	\$245,722	\$0	\$314,299

*This includes more income than the three types listed

2019 YEAR END

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS	LOAN FORGIVENESS	TOTAL INCOME*
\$143,818	\$330,871	\$76,500	\$587,399

*This includes more income than the three types listed



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AWAKENED LEADERSHIP IMMERSION

This quarter the Monastic Academy leadership team designed and implemented a new curriculum that provides in-depth training for residents, apprentices, and guests to connect with the ethos and practices of MAPLE. This team included our Head Teacher Soryu Forall, Executive Director Peter Park, Head of Curriculum Daniel Thorson, Director of Care Autumn Turley, and Bio-Emotive Facilitator Alexandra Hōji Tataryn. The resulting five-day Awakened Leadership Immersion was even more successful than we had hoped.

The Immersion weaves together the many practices here at MAPLE into a modern version of the Buddhist Eightfold Path, which is the best strategy we know of for responding to the crises that threaten life on earth. It teaches us how to purify our minds, enabling us to act from clarity, service, and love. This ultimately changes our lifestyles to become more compassionate and sustainable, which is a path that leads us to awakening and the fulfillment of our vow. We use the word vow to speak of our work to be of service in this world and our highest aspiration in this lifetime.

Four threads in our ecology of practices that aid us on the Eightfold Path are emotional clearing, interpersonal connection, embodiment, and meditation. Emotional clearing (specifically, Bio-Emotive processing) enables participants to clear stuck emotions that hinder the ability to see and act with clarity. Interpersonal meditation (i.e., circling) cultivates deep relationship, friendship, and the ability to speak truthfully. Embodiment practices open up new ways of engaging with our somatic experience of agency and impact. Hours of silent meditation, supported by daily instruction, help purify our minds and give rise to spiritual joy. Throughout the workshop daily talks link each practice with different facets of the Eightfold Path.

Our first offering of the Awakened Leadership Immersion impacted guests, apprentices, and residents alike. Multiple apprentices shared that this experience was exactly what they came to practice. Residents reconnected deeply with their sense of purpose in dedicating their lives to this training. Guests left with clear commitments to the next steps they will take to live their vow. The Immersion was a great success, and we plan to start running them quarterly. Our next one is already scheduled for June 1-7!

LEADERSHIP EMERGES: PROFILE ON BROOKS YARDLEY



Brooks has been a contact improvisation (CI) dancer for more than 10 years and has occasionally taught the form. He sees movement practice as a way to honor the intelligence in the body that goes beyond what the mind can understand.

He has several years experience in Circling and authentic relating including training and experience facilitating these practices.

Brooks also has a master's in Occupational Therapy from McGill University and a bachelor's in Psychology from Concordia University. He worked for a year and a half as an OT with the Cree Health Board in Northern Québec. In his free time he has done some journalism and advocacy work to support the development of alternative economic systems and distributed applications based on emerging peer-to-peer technologies.

INTERVIEW WITH BROOKS:

Why did you join the MAPLE Apprenticeship?

Desperation. Grief. Despair. I was living alone in an apartment in Montreal and becoming increasingly disillusioned with and resistant to participating in the conventional way of doing things. I didn't want to be complicit in the horrifying destruction of life on this beautiful planet, and I also couldn't find a way out of the seemingly inescapable systems that kept me in the status quo hurtling towards collapse. I found it encouraging to discover the Monastic Academy, a place where the wicked severity of these crises was explicitly acknowledged, and where they actually aspired to address the root problems at their deepest levels. There was nothing else that seemed worth doing.

How have you benefited from your time here?

I found it extremely supportive to live in community with a clear structure and schedule and highly responsive accountability from the group to help keep me in integrity. I deeply desire to live in integrity with other people and with life on Earth, and I found it much easier to work towards that goal at MAPLE than in any other situation I've ever been in. I'm glad to have made many good friends during my time there.

I also discovered a deep, mystical beauty in the teachings of the dharma. I had been to several meditation retreats beforehand, and read books about Zen and so on, but I had no idea how vibrant, alive and mysterious Buddhism could be. I'm coming away with a renewed passion for the Path, and a profound gratitude for the countless generations of teachers and communities who have kept the tradition alive over the millennia.

The grief that was with me has shifted. It isn't gone, nor should it ever be gone I expect. But without turning away from the horrors of modern civilization's destruction of Mother Nature, I have a sense of peace, and dare I say, maybe even happiness. And this peaceful sense of acceptance is somehow accompanied by a greater determination than ever to actually do something to stop the evil of the machine that is eating the planet. I am beginning to see how taking on the immense responsibility for protecting life on Earth can actually be empowering instead of depressing or overwhelming.

What has been your biggest challenge?

I oriented myself to the whole experience with such a sense of faith and gratitude that I honestly struggle to think of anything that I would call "challenging." The entire experience seemed like a long-drawn out synchronicity where everything that seemed difficult was exactly what I needed. If pressed I would say that the most challenging thing was being isolated from my friends and my community outside of MAPLE. But despite this being challenging, I was able to appreciate the benefit of taking some distance from my usual and insulated subcultures so I could see more clearly their underlying, invisible assumptions.

Otherwise, the real biggest challenge has been *leaving* MAPLE. As I write this it has been a week and a half since my apprenticeship ended and I find that training out here is a higher level of difficulty than in the carefully designed structure of the monastery.



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MOVING FORWARD

This summer marks a transition for the Monastic Academy as we shift our apprentice program into a cohort model, allowing us to more effectively organize the training we provide. In the first week of training apprentices will complete an Awakened Leadership Immersion. This will orient them to our ecology of practices, including the Buddhist Eightfold Path, embodiment, and applying deep mindfulness to work in action. After completing the immersion they will be introduced to the rhythms and rituals that shape daily life at MAPLE.

Over the course of their stay they will move through our full curriculum with the goal of enabling them to act as pastors or spiritual guides after they leave. Apprentices will be set up for success in making the best use of their time here and in gaining mindfulness and leadership skills to take into the rest of their lives. Our first apprentice cohort of five excellent student leaders begins this June.

The Awakened Leadership Immersion, in addition to strengthening the apprenticeship program, is a transformative experience for guests and residents. One resident shared that the curriculum gave her the vocabulary to explain “the urgency of what we do here and the relevance of monasticism and the Eightfold Path to modern issues like collapse.” Guests told us they came out of the week feeling motivated and empowered to deepen their commitment to their life calling. We look forward to exploring how we can make the June Immersion even more cohesive and enriching.

In another exciting transition, residents and apprentices are increasingly involved in the work of fundraising, which is integral to our mission of creating a trustworthy culture. We have been finding creative ways to orient residents and apprentices towards fundraising as a spiritual practice of cultivating compassion, humility, and trustworthiness. Each meal can remind us of the financial support of people who believe in us, care deeply about us, and trust us to do what needs to be done to end the destruction of life on earth. This inspires us to hold ourselves to a standard of impeccability.

As we continue our training through the COVID-19 crisis we face a new challenge: how do we survive financially in the face of global economic uncertainty? Through creativity and innovation we will continue to strive to strengthen this organization. We are profoundly grateful for our supporters, who continue to recognize deep practice and awakened leadership as imperative guides through the mists of fear and panic, and have been deeply touched and inspired by how you have shown up. Now, more than ever, your financial support has the power to make a global impact as we train to step straight into a global crisis with peace, strength, and clarity.

As people around the world face the myriad impacts of social isolation, we at MAPLE are blessed to live in community. Each day we are here to practice together, grieve and celebrate together, and care for each other. The MAPLE Village offers you the opportunity to join us in building a culture where we can face challenges together rather than being stuck on our own. Now is the best time to start the process of building your own home on our land. Together we can overcome fear, panic, and isolation with the love and strength of deep practice in community.



SPRING SCHEDULE

April 17 - 24

Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

May 15 - 22

Silent Meditation Retreat with Soryu Forall

May 30

Celebration of Soryu

June 1 - June 7*

Awakened Leadership Immersion

June 19 - June 26*

Bio-Emotive Emotional Clearing Retreat

July 17 - July 24*

Circling (Interpersonal Meditation) Retreat

*Our summer retreat dates may change. Please check monasticacademy.org/events for the most up-to-date information.

JOIN US

If you are interested in our events please don't hesitate to reserve a spot.

Due to uncertain times we will be issuing refunds if an event is cancelled.

You are always welcome to visit for a day, a week, a month, or longer.

Email info@monasticacademy.org or call 802-540-0820.

Our address is:

751 Page Rd

Lowell, VT 05847

Together we are building a new, trustworthy culture.

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