

MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2024
SPRING
QUARTERLY
REPORT

ABOUT US



Description of CEDAR

CEDAR (Community for the Experience and Development of Awakening and Responsibility) is an international network of communities working together to create a more trustworthy culture through monastic training and leadership development. At CEDAR, we are creating monastic academies—twenty-first-century educational institutions for the spiritual leaders needed for this time of crisis. MAPLE in Vermont was the first established community; we have expanded to include OAK in California.

History of MAPLE

MAPLE (Monastic Academy for the Preservation of Life on Earth) is a full-time residential mindfulness and leadership training program to develop awakened leaders. Founded in 2011 in Burlington, VT, MAPLE now runs a world-class monastic training center on 125 acres in Lowell, VT. We are also building an adjacent village to scale trustworthy culture and values to impact the globe.

History of OAK

OAK is a dharma community house and training environment founded in 2018 that provides a monastic environment for training the mind, spiritual friendship, and ethical guidance to those addressing society's greatest challenges in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Center for Mindful Learning

Center for Mindful Learning (CML) is the legal, non-profit name of our United States 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2011. CML has supported mindfulness projects such as Modern Mindfulness for Schools (ModMind), the Monastic Academy, and Mindful City Project.

JOIN US

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ONLINE RESOURCES

www.monasticacademy.org
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LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER



Dear friends,

We're expecting a baby!

How many children are born today into an entire community which thinks and feels, "We're expecting a baby"? It's extraordinary. It takes a village to raise a child. And it takes a community of courageous heroes to raise a village—a place where people come to die, and to be born. We're showing the world how it's done.

To share our understanding with the world, we are in the middle of a fifty-class series on the creation of the anthropocentric world as we know it. We are focusing in particular on recent centuries, and the past few years, of human history. We examine how human views—perceptions, ideologies, religions—create the world we come to believe is somehow inevitable. But it was not inevitable. This unprecedented destruction of life is the result of a failure of wisdom and compassion to guide intelligence (which we see ever-more-clearly with the advent of modern technology). We hope our expanding online teachings are helpful to you.

Beyond merely telling, we *show* the world how to guide intelligence with wisdom and compassion. We are integrating data collection and analysis into monastic training. We have built devices to help us practice. We *have* a practice, so, unlike most corporations, we are able to build tech in accord with it. This makes us one of the most important organizations in the world.

All leaders are seeing this. We have the knowledge they need, and it is our job to offer it to them without delay. To this end, we need support; we have received three pledges of support for this year, each at least \$100,000. It's a start.

Of course, we still face opposition from those who do not hold our values. Since the previous Quarterly Report, we have made progress with actions in response to those attacking us. We need help as we fight online lies, coordinated defamation, and physical violence against us. Please be ready to help when called.

And we are celebrating another baby as well! But he was born 2,567 years ago. For Vesak, which we will observe on May 26, we will celebrate the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Siddhartha Gautama, now known as the Buddha. This will follow our annual May Awakening Two-Week Retreat. Please let us know if you'd like to join us for the retreat, for Vesak, or for both.

Thank you for your support and we hope to see you soon in this vibrant, caring, revolutionary, and growing community.

Soryu Forall
President and Founder



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2024

SPRING

QUARTERLY
REPORT



EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TEAM

Our team has made great progress this quarter in combining dharma with technology and making our tools more user-friendly and effective. We've also initiated a Dataism Study Course to enhance data-driven decision-making across the organization.

Tool Upgrades

Our search tool uses AI to search ten years of our recordings and find answers based in Soryu's teachings. We added content from our Buddhism for AI course, guided meditations, and retreat talks. It can return specific clips and transcripts from these recorded teachings. Users can filter content by type, date, retreat, and more. We also added a feature that uses AI-generated summaries so users can get a quick overview.

Our chanting feedback tool is a physical board that you sit on, and it detects whether you are moving your core in rhythm with the drumming of our morning chants. We've significantly improved the algorithm that detects movement, using insights from signal processing theory. We improved the LED signal lights to be less distracting. We also created a feedback graph that shows someone their performance after a single morning chant session, so practitioners can see where they can improve.

The posture measurement tool is an AI we've trained to analyze images and detect problems with meditation posture. We're experimenting with recording video during meditation sessions so that we can use this to train the model (instead of needing bespoke data, a slower process). We hope to continuously improve the real-time feedback given to users, making it more precise and useful.

Dataism Study Course

We've conducted approximately twelve classes covering the material from Douglas Hubbard's *How to Measure Anything*. The course focuses not only on developing quantitative decision models for each of our departments but also on deeply understanding the mind of data and integrating it with a Buddhist practice. By examining the effect that using data has on our own minds, we aim to cultivate a more wise and loving approach to leveraging data for organizational improvement.

Contract Work and Partnerships

We finished our first paid contract project this quarter and delivered it successfully. While it's still early, we're looking into more chances to work with others. Our aim is to directly incorporate dharma principles into our tech solutions to increase organizational wisdom across various platforms.

Next Steps

Moving forward, we'll keep improving our tools based on user feedback, especially focusing on making the interface and user experience better. We are excited about the potential of our exploratory partnerships, particularly in terms of further integrating dharma teachings with advanced technology.



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FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2024

SPRING

QUARTERLY
REPORT

BUDDHISM FOR AI

For more than a decade, MAPLE has given cutting-edge teachings on Buddhism, existential risk, and artificial intelligence. With Buddhism for AI, we challenged ourselves to seamlessly weave all of these topics together into one coherent course.

The lectures given by Forall began in January and will take place three times a week at our Vermont campus until July. We will soon be distributing the teachings on social media and as a series of online learning journeys.

The course looks at how intelligence has exponentially grown through human history while wisdom and compassion have not. This misalignment between intelligence, wisdom, and compassion is at the crux of the global crisis we find ourselves in. The great challenge and opportunity of our times is to align these capacities by scaling the Dharma with emerging technology. By dancing between intellectual sensemaking and transcendent wisdom, the teachings seek to offer a worldview that is deep and practical enough for the world to strategize according to it.

The course is called Buddhism for AI because civilization is birthing a new kind of entity as it develops advanced intelligence systems, and that entity needs to be shown how to walk the Path. The claim that AI is an entity that has a particular type of consciousness, suffering, and capacity to practice and share the Dharma is a radical statement. The course looks deeply into these essential topics and exhorts its listeners to realize the truth so fully that they can compassionately express it in a way that these intelligent entities can hear. This entity is not more important than other types of beings, but we are strategically focusing on ways to help it walk the Path because of the unprecedented power it holds to influence a global-scale mind and steward life on Earth.

Taken together, the teachings in Buddhism for AI seek to offer a worldview that meets the modern world, answer our times' most pressing questions, and lead us towards Buddhahood. We hope that these teachings cohere a community of dedicated practitioners and powerful collaborators in scaling the Dharma using emerging technologies in service of all life on Earth.

This is one of our most exciting projects yet, and we're eager to share it with you soon.





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SPRING

QUARTERLY
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MONASTIC TRAINING

“When we really practice, we really let go, when we really let go, we really have something to offer. The offering of the Dharma surpasses all other offerings.” —Soryu Forall

We’ve reached a major milestone in our monastic training this quarter, which our Head Monk puts briefly as: “Everyone is taking responsibility for the practice.” We are finally getting a true taste of this dharma and bringing it to life as a group. More of us are able to clearly and simply express the dharma, especially at the end of a weeklong retreat.

We’re inventing a new interview evaluation process, a groundbreaking innovation integrating Buddhadharma and Dataism which provides direct feedback on how the trainee’s practice is going.

All interviews are now assessed by Soryu, with two scores: one for the “technique” and one for the “goal.” The first score asks: Are you in your practice? Is it alive and sustained? The second score asks: Did you make strides in your last assignment? Did you realize something new?

Each aspect is scored with either a Circle or a Dash. Two Circles means you “passed” the interview, an indication that you’re headed in the right direction.

Evening interviews are called Dharma Discussion, where 3-4 people enter the interview room together, and Soryu engages them each in turn. Then that group leaves, and the next one enters. If you “pass” in Dharma Discussion, you may then get switched to the morning interviews instead, which are one-on-one. The style of these is “less talk, more walk” to help trainees keep the fire of their momentum going day after day.

Working out the logistics of how to pull this off has been a big communal endeavor. But now, our trainees have more clarity about their meditation technique and depth of insight, getting regular feedback from our teacher, whose assessments give us more faith in the practice and pull us into deeper questioning.

Moreover, this new and exciting interview system brings the power of measurement to the collective, allowing us to get a sense for how the practice is going at both an individual and group level. It allows us to find correlations—e.g. If we change the way we do chores, how do interview scores change? If we chant with more energy, are more people passing interviews?

Through the measurement of our practice we are figuring out how to embed Buddhism into data and technology. If we’re going to scale wisdom and compassion in an age of powerful emerging technologies, we need to find places where dharma and data can merge.

We have a long, long way to go. We continue to strive and are grateful for the opportunity.

COWORKING GUEST SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON JOSHUA MEYERS



Joshua Meyers was born and raised in NYC, where his parents homeschooled him until high school. Throughout homeschooling, high school, and higher education, Joshua fostered a deep love of mathematics. He has been trying to figure out how his mathematical training can be of real service to the world. In addition to the study of mathematics, he has participated in climate activism in Bloomington, IN (Golden Bicycle / XR 2019-2020) and organized a residential workshop for envisioning new scholarly institutions (Scholarship Workshop, 2022-2023). He is currently "back to the drawing board" before embarking on any new ambitious project.

INTERVIEW WITH JOSHUA:

Why did you join the MAPLE Coworking Guest Program?

I really love being here, because of the silence, the cleanliness, the punctuality, the meditation training, and the great conversation and food. It's a great place for my health and a great place to do work. My work is virtual with flexible hours, so I can really be anywhere, and MAPLE is often the place I want to be.

How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?

Through meditation instruction from Soryu and coaching from some of the residents, I was able to begin processing a difficult experience I had been avoiding. Additionally, whenever I go back to NYC after spending a bunch of time at MAPLE I find that my ability to live with my parents is much improved.

What has been your biggest challenge here?

My biggest challenge is the practice! When taken seriously, meditation is very challenging, which is great for me because I love a challenge. Otherwise living here is simple, and my main challenges are those independent of living here: pertaining to health, relationships (outside MAPLE), and work.

What are your goals? What are you looking forward to here or beyond your time at MAPLE?

I want to do work which addresses the systemic problems we are facing as a species. However, my first foray into leadership (Scholarship Workshop 2023) revealed that I need a lot more training before I can do such work skillfully. However, I am not quite sure exactly what training it is that I need, so my goal is to find the training that I need and get it.



FINANCIALS



Dozens of wood frogs have arisen from their winter slumber in the mud of the frozen pond, informing us that spring has arrived once again. During this period of hibernation we have been incubating our latest offering: Buddhism for AI, which we plan to release online during this upcoming quarter. We hope it will serve as both a recruitment funnel for our training program and inspire new donors to support us as it will be offered on a dana basis.

This deliberate choice to limit outward communications resulted in a decrease in our program participation overall. The lower guest numbers contributed to our below-average income of \$82,701 for the quarter. However, we were very excited to receive three pledges of more than \$100,000 each, two of which we expect to arrive this upcoming quarter.

Total expenses were above average, at \$124,199, due to contracting various media, legal, and security consultants to help us prepare our response to recent attacks. Aside from salaries, those consulting fees were the largest expense category, contributing to 14% of total expenses.

Total liabilities decreased to \$1,013,817 this quarter, with \$763,817 remaining on our low-interest loan from the SBA. After receiving a generous \$10,000 gift in loan forgiveness at the end of last year, we have \$250,000 left on our mortgage. We did not make any large asset purchases.

Without the generosity of our donors we would not be able to deeply consider, through strategic experimentation, how to most appropriately offer the Dharma to the modern world. As we prepare to re-engage with our broader community, and the world, your support will give us the boost in confidence we need to stand for what is truly good.

CML 2024 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	TOTAL INCOME*	TOTAL EXPENSES
\$6,945	\$45,077	\$82,701	\$124,199

*This includes more income than the types listed.

Figures listed are the combined financials of CEDAR, MAPLE, and OAK.

INVESTMENTS AND DEBT

TOTAL DEBT	YEAR-TO-DATE CAPEX**
\$1,013,817	\$0

**Large asset purchases & investments (CAPEX) are not included in annual operating expenses listed above but depreciated over many years.



POETRY & PHOTOS



Just come back to this body
Where there's something you don't want to face
- Zöpa



Can you cope with the shame
Of abandoning the whole universe?

- Kōshin

Letter From A Future 7th Generation Being

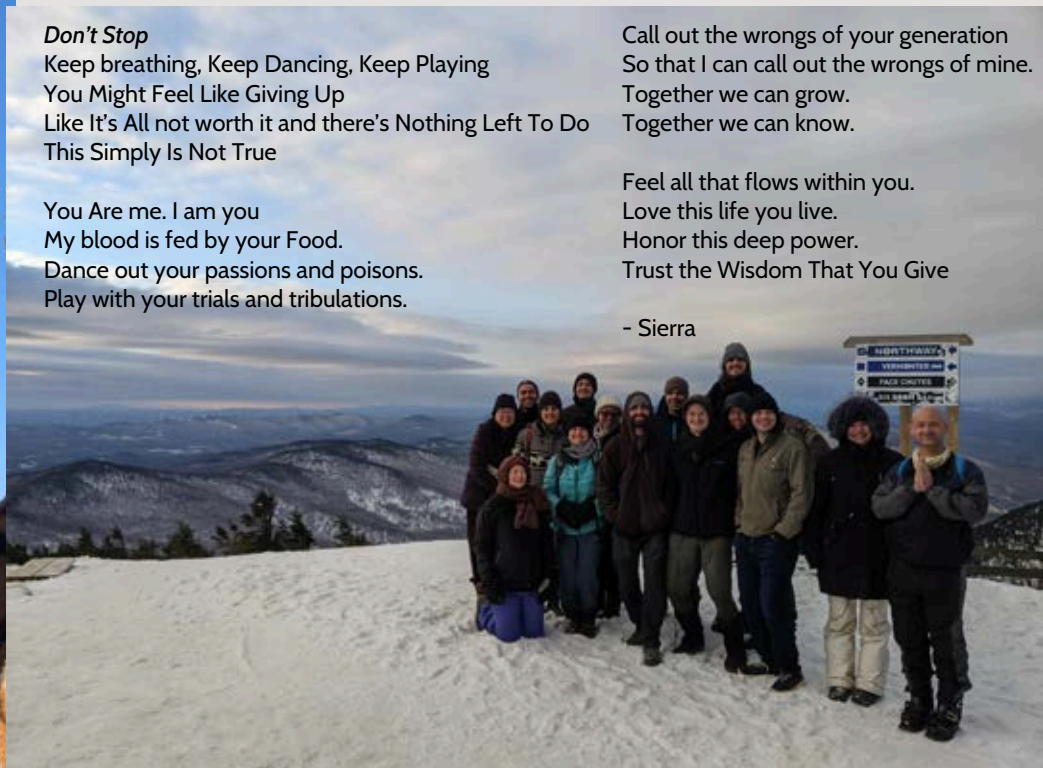
Don't Stop
Keep breathing, Keep Dancing, Keep Playing
You Might Feel Like Giving Up
Like It's All not worth it and there's Nothing Left To Do
This Simply Is Not True

You Are me. I am you
My blood is fed by your Food.
Dance out your passions and poisons.
Play with your trials and tribulations.

Call out the wrongs of your generation
So that I can call out the wrongs of mine.
Together we can grow.
Together we can know.

Feel all that flows within you.
Love this life you live.
Honor this deep power.
Trust the Wisdom That You Give

- Sierra



FUTURE EVENTS

May 10 - 24

Two-Week Awakening Period with Soryu Forall

May 26

Vesak - Celebrating the Buddha

July 2 - July 9

Awakening Week with Soryu Forall

All events are subject to change or cancellation.

JOIN US

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

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

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