



# MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

## CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE  
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2023  
**FALL**  
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, and we have now expanded to include Oak in California and Willow in Canada.

## 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 monastic academy founded in 2018 that provides monastic training, trustworthy friendship, and spiritual guidance to those addressing society's greatest challenges in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## History of Willow

Willow is a community Dharma house located near Toronto—the first international member of CEDAR. Founded in 2020, Willow brings modern monastic training to the many beautiful communities in Canada, particularly those in Toronto and Montreal.

## 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

751 Page Rd, Lowell, VT 05847  
info@monasticacademy.org  
802-540-0820

## ONLINE RESOURCES

[www.monasticacademy.org](http://www.monasticacademy.org)  
[www.facebook.com/monasticacademy](https://www.facebook.com/monasticacademy)  
[www.youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning](https://www.youtube.com/c/CenterforMindfulLearning)  
[www.twitter.com/MonasticAcademy](https://www.twitter.com/MonasticAcademy)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear friends,

As the foliage changes color in the surrounding, beautiful Vermont forest, MAPLE continues to grow and evolve. Our head teacher, Soryu Forall, has been away this quarter for his annual training period. In his absence, we focused on intensive dharma study.

Bodhi, our training coordinator, has been leading regular dharma studies to our trainees. In August, we ran our first dharma study retreat. Participants each gave a talk at the end of their learning. Bodhi has been working on providing these dharma studies online. One participant described it as “the most comprehensive and deep curriculum of Buddhism for our times.”

We have also been leveraging technology like AI to assist in our practice and studies. One prototype we created has been crucial in searching through our decades of audio archives and finding relevant teachings.

At the beginning of September, Darren Silver led our annual Vision Quest. It’s always a wonderful gift to reconnect with the land. We get to leave behind our buildings and wifi and touch into the wilderness within us and around us.

This past quarter saw several of our residential trainees transition to service in the world including Dechen, Dan, Hōshin, and Sky. We also said farewell to our Executive Director, Karuna Sophia Gallagher, who stewarded the community in the past year. She was the catalyst for our dharma study course. We thank each of these beloved members for their efforts and dedication.

Artificial intelligence makes explicit the vital question of the twenty-first century: what do we value as a species? The global systems and algorithms dominating the world currently are running off the values of exploitation and profit-maximization. Humanity no longer shares a collective reality of what is true or factual. As AI-based systems increasingly control our non-physical economy, they are able to control the physical world, thereby colonizing our mental world—our thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. At MAPLE, we vow to purify our own minds to be capable of withstanding the onslaught of the world’s delusions. From that less addicted mind, we attempt to share our piece of the puzzle towards a world where we may realize the truth amidst delusion, compassion amidst hatred, and peace amidst cravings.

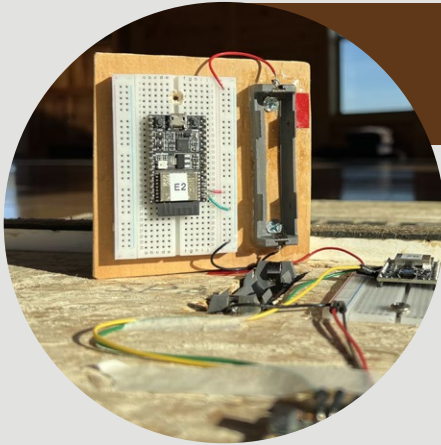
Interim Director,  
Xūramitra Peter Park



MONASTIC ACADEMY

FOR THE PRESERVATION OF LIFE ON EARTH

2023  
**FALL**  
QUARTERLY  
REPORT



## EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES TEAM

This quarter, our Emerging Technologies team focused on deepening our technical skills and understanding the landscape of AI applications. We successfully undertook the complex task of fine-tuning our own machine-learning models using existing resources such as recordings of guided meditations. Our exploration included various forms of data—text, image, video, and voice—and how to optimally integrate them into our systems.

Our key learnings highlight the current strengths and limitations of Large Language Models (LLMs). While LLMs are effective in working with existing data, they have limitations in generating entirely new and reliable data. Furthermore, we discovered that more actionable insights were generated from trying to identify hindrances or obstacles to practice, rather than trying to identify correct or perfect practice. We found this in the realm of measuring posture and measuring concentration during meditation. This led us to the understanding that wisdom should be triangulated through multiple signals rather than relying on a single metric.

Building on these learnings, our plans for the next quarter include developing practical tools for regular use at the Monastic Academy. In terms of public outreach and education, our efforts have been featured in *The Atlantic* and in an interview of Soryu Forall by Layman Pascal; we've also begun creating a new course on Buddhism and AI. With this momentum, we aim to gauge the wider community's interest in these tools and our expertise, thereby expanding the scope and impact of our work.

### URLs for Further Reading:

#### The Atlantic Article:

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/06/buddhist-monks-vermont-ai-apocalypse/674501/>

#### Interview of Soryu Forall:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1j9XU\\_1PVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1j9XU_1PVY)

#### Buddhism and AI Course:

<https://www.monasticacademy.com/buddhism-for-all/>

## COWORKING RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: PROFILE ON BEN SMITH



*Ben Smith*

*majored in Mathematics & Philosophy at CSU Sacramento and other institutions before taking a detour into long-haul truck driving, during which he developed a deep interest in the emerging metamodern space through podcasts like Emerge, Nate Hagens' Great Simplification, as well as Rebel Wisdom and The Stoa. Eventually he started his own YouTube channel Good Sensemaking using material from Daniel Schmachtenberger and others as a launchpad for discussing potential Meta-Crisis solutions. That led to involvement with the Emergent Commons community and with Zak Stein working on Meta-Crisis curricular assets, based out of the Monastic Academy. Ben's personal mantra taken from James P. Carse's Finite & Infinite Games is to "contain the serious within the playful" and applies that within his larger philosophy of "getting good at existing" taken from the film Groundhog Day.*

INTERVIEW WITH BEN:

***Why did you join the MAPLE Coworking Residency program?***

I joined the MAPLE Coworking Program by recommendation of Zak Stein, being that it's a particularly excellent place to work on civic projects within a community of practice, where one can simultaneously cultivate contemplative practices and embodiment.

***How have you benefited from your time at MAPLE?***

The first benefit which comes to mind is really the friends I've made here and the relationships I've managed to cultivate. The second and more obvious benefit which comes to mind is the development of a more embodied practice of meditation through my daily life and work, which I expect will prove invaluable over the course of my life.

***What has been your biggest challenge?***

My biggest challenge has been the 4am wake-up time, of which I've come close to collecting petition signatures to extend it, but in time I've grown to enjoy the morning chant, which gives me a kind of "Energizer bunny" momentum during the day.

***What are your goals?***

My goal is simply to plot the most appropriate course of action for navigating the Meta-Crisis and then effectively bring that course of action to bear with the collaboration of others.

***What have you learned during your time at MAPLE?***

While at MAPLE, I've learned how to meditate more effectively through energetic breathing and the Jade Method. I've also incorporated a more attuned sense to my own somatic experiences through embodiment. On a personal note, I've really learned how to live amongst a monastic community based in contemplative practices and the Dharma.

***How might you bring what you've learned out into the broader world?***

I plan to bring what I've learned into the broader world primarily by living through example, as well as by incorporating what I've learned into my YouTube channel *Good Sensemaking* as I continue to grow it.



## FINANCIALS



This summer was a time for simplicity. With very few events, the community was able to fall into a predictable rhythm of practice and study. In addition, trainees could throw themselves into the training more fully. This rhythm made it easy for growing numbers of coworking guests to quickly feel like a part of the day-to-day life at MAPLE. They joined us for morning and evening sitting periods, and worked on their own projects during the day.

Those guests, along with other short-term guests, contributed a significant portion (54%) of CML's \$41,199 in income for this quarter. Total expenses for the quarter were \$130,761.

Regarding liabilities, CML continues to regularly pay down its debt, which currently stands at \$1,036,527. This includes our original mortgage for the Lowell property, which currently has a remainder of \$260,000, and our SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loan with a remainder of \$776,527.

As we strive to discover the most effective way to teach the Dharma, the extent to which we are supported by our broader community is the extent to which we can throw ourselves into this work with confidence. Thank you for believing in what we do.

### CML 2023 YEAR-TO-DATE

GUEST INCOME	DONATIONS & GRANTS	TOTAL INCOME*	TOTAL EXPENSES
\$71,968	\$184,123	\$277,296	\$386,206

*\*This includes more income than the three listed*

*Figures listed are the combined financials of CEDAR, MAPLE, and Oak and do not include Willow, our Canadian location.*

### INVESTMENTS AND DEBT

TOTAL DEBT	YEAR-TO-DATE CAPEX**
\$1,036,501	\$14,816

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



POETRY & PHOTOS

Here are some of our favorite poems from the community, which hold the insights that have arisen from the clarity of retreat.



Your lifeline is here  
Not the ammo you asked for  
The white flag you need

- Tim TL

Throw it all up  
Throw it all up  
This is also life

Maybe part of awakening  
Is to throw it all up  
Be ready, willing  
To throw it all up again  
All that you've consumed

And you know  
You love others' vomit  
Take that in  
Make it beautiful somehow

- Kyōshin



winter  
the cradle that held me

winter  
the master that ruled me

this early heat will end you soon  
and 'goodbye' is catching in my throat

- Dechen



# FUTURE EVENTS

November 10 - 17 2023

Awakening Week with Soryu Forall

December 1 - 8 2023

Awakening Week with Soryu Forall

January 12 - 19 2023

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](mailto:info@monasticacademy.org) or call 802-540-0820.

**Our address is:**

**751 Page Rd**

**Lowell, VT 05847**

Together we are building a trustworthy culture.

# CEDAR

COMMUNITY FOR THE  
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
AWAKENING AND RESPONSIBILITY

2023  
**FALL**  
QUARTERLY  
REPORT