

Realising Thày's Vision of World Peace and Transformation - An Invitation (and Request)

Waldröhl, 09 March, 2018

Dear Respected Friends,

As we greeted the Year of the Earth Dog in Germany last month, joyful members of the Fourfold Sangha of the European Institute of Applied Buddhism (EIAB) began turning the earth under the snow to start construction - symbolically - of a meditation hall. This serene ceremony, held at dawn, also symbolised re-commencement of essential renovations to other parts of the Institute's main building.

Our spades were filled not only with earth but with hope and confidence that, as EIAB completes its first decade this September, our solemn intention to equip it to serve peace and understanding in Europe - and the world - for decades to come will be realised with the loving support and generosity of friends. In fact all we have been able to do until now has been realised with the help from our supporters.

On a practical level, our heartfelt wish is that the many thousands of people we welcome each year to EIAB should not forever shiver in an icy make-do meditation hall during the winter, or sleep outside in tents during the summer, when we have enough land for a purpose-built meditation hall and, theoretically, enough rooms to accommodate up to 500. So while EIAB has made a strong start, there is still a long way to go. It means that we Plum Village monastics must practice to overcome personal hesitancy about asking yet again for financial support, and humbly, respectfully seek further help from the wider Sangha to turn this next phase of EIAB's development into reality.

Sometimes we are daunted by the physical scale of what are attempting – EIAB's main building is 150 metres long, with six levels occupying a total of 12,000 sq m (129,167 sq ft) of which only 20 per cent and the ground floor has so far been renovated to German occupancy standards. But we are always inspired anew by what Thày once said regarding anticipated difficulties with the EIAB project: "Nobody will stop me from doing it, because this project will greatly benefit the people of our time as well as many future generations to come."

Already, your generous contributions have helped to install mandatory fire escapes, fire doors and alarm systems; to build a new kitchen to German hygiene standards and a new dining hall that can seat 200. Your contributions have also gone towards repairing the old heating system and replacing rusty water pipes from the 1930s. If we are to fulfil our hopes to accommodate more people, we must build more showers and toilets as a prerequisite for applying for more occupancy permits.

For those who may not be so familiar with Applied Buddhism, it is a type of practice we can introduce into everyday life. It is not theoretical but something concrete we can learn and do right away. Each year EIAB offers more than 100 courses, from basic-to-advanced Buddhist teachings

and practices that promote personal healing, transformation and mindful communication, and on related subjects as diverse as acupuncture training for medical professionals, Buddhist psychology, qì gong, mindful photography, dance therapy, calligraphy, and vegetarian cooking. Our summer retreats are themed around subjects such as “Finding Peace within Constant Change” and “Nourishing Happiness in Our Hearts”. The teaching we offer is non-sectarian, and helps to cultivate harmony, understanding and acceptance between different spiritual religious traditions and cultures.

Applied Buddhism builds upon Engaged Buddhism, pioneered by Thầy (Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh) more than 50 years ago during the agony of the war in Vietnam. Thầy saw so much suffering around him. He wanted to take Buddhist practice beyond the temple, where it was concentrated, and into the society. He wanted the lay community also to benefit from the transformation and healing the Buddha taught. Ever true to his Bodhisattva Vow of Great Compassion, Thầy has devoted his entire life to building peace and ending war; to helping people reconcile and to transform their suffering - not only in Vietnam but throughout the world.

When it came to establishing the first Institute of Applied Buddhism, Thầy chose Germany because of its geographical reach to countries in northern and central Europe and beyond. He had people out looking at hundreds of properties over many months. When it came to deciding upon the estate at Waldbröl, 70 km from Cologne, Thầy believes it was Waldbröl that chose Plum Village.

In peace and war, the massive structure that is now our Institute’s Asoka Building has witnessed much pain and suffering. It was built in the late 19th century as a hospital for the mentally and physically disabled. During the Nazi era, the building was commandeered and some 700 patients sent to an uncertain fate in another town. After the war it was a general and maternity hospital and then a military facility until 2006, after which it stood empty - until it came to Thầy’s attention.

Today, the deep energy of sorrow that once lingered over EIAB has taken refuge in the spiritual energy of Thầy and the Plum Village Sangha, for transformation and reconciliation. EIAB is a loving gift of Vietnamese Buddhism, not only to the European community but to the whole world. With the simple and concrete practice of mindfulness, we are contributing to building the culture of peace and harmony our world urgently needs.

We invite friends and Thầy’s supporters around the globe to participate in the next phase of EIAB’s construction programme so that, together, we can join Thầy on his path of bringing Engaged and Applied Buddhism to all walks of modern life; nourish our aspirations for a Bodhisattva’s way of life, and help the Three Jewels be a place of refuge for all in today’s troubled, confusing and volatile world.

With deep gratitude, love and respect,

Thầy Pháp Ân and the sisters and the brothers of EIAB

Below is our Bank Account information for your bank transfer:

Receiver:	EIAB (European Institute of Applied Buddhism gGmbH)
Bank’s Name:	Kreissparkasse Köln
Account Number:	IBAN: DE27 3705 0299 0341 5529 32
S.W.I.F.T - BIC	COKSDE33XXX

**Ceremony to Begin Construction of the Meditation Hall
and Further Renovations to EIAB's Asoka Building**
19th of February, 2018 - 4th day of the first month of the Year of Earth Dog

1. In the
foyer of the Asoka Building



2. Ceremony to begin construction of the
Meditation Hall



3. Ceremony to begin renovation of the 2nd section
of the Asoka Building



4. Ceremony to begin renovation of the 3rd section
of the Asoka Building



5. Outdoor "earth ceremony" to begin construction of the Meditation Hall



