

Announcement for Next Ecodharma Bearing Witness Pilgrimage

to Germany, from the open pit mining in the Rhineland to the flood-damaged Ahr valley
in the Spirit of the Zen Peacemakers

May 8-12, 2024



www.bearing-witness.eu

We will go to places that are connected with the ecological crisis. The place is our teacher – we listen.

This retreat will be a pilgrimage in West Germany near the Dutch and Belgian border.

The programme is as follows:

- On Wednesday May 8th we will gather in the evening for a potluck dinner, an introduction to each other, to the programme and to the themes of the retreat and we will have a first sharing circle.
- On Thursday May 9th we will spend time at the Hambach opencast lignite mine and activists who are committed to the preservation of nature and the villages in the Rhenish lignite mining area and continue to campaign for an end to the climate-damaging production of electricity from lignite by the energy company RWE
- Friday May 9-10 we will visit the German airbase Nörvenich. Until 2026, Nörvenich will serve as an alternative base for the Tornado fighter aircraft of Tactical Air Wing 33 from Büchel airbase, which will be used to deliver the nuclear bombs kept in Büchel to their targets in the event of war. Then we travel further to the village of Schuld in the Ahr Valley, which was strongly damaged by floods in July 2021. There we will spend the night.
- On Saturday May 11 we will walk along the Ahr river from Schuld in the direction to Altenahr for about 10 km. Along the way, we will visit buildings damaged by the flood, talk with residents about their experiences and find places to eat and sleep. We will spend the evening and the night a place near Ahrbrück.
- On Sunday May 12th, we will continue our walk to Altenahr and finish our programme in the beginning of the afternoon.



The programme of the retreat, the food and sleeping accommodations will not all be prepared before the retreat, only rough ideas and some accommodations that we visited before. For the rest we will trust in our own creativity, cocreation, inventivity and meeting friendly people who will help us find our way. We will practice long distance walking and use public transports.



In this retreat, we will reconnect to the Earth and reflect on how we in our society treat our sacred environment. We will honor and celebrate the beauty of nature and feel and share how the ecological crises affect us. We may end up with more questions than answers or solutions, but we will at least try to no longer look away. There will be space for multiple perspectives and inspirations and for the authentic experience and insights of each participant.



Not knowing, bearing witness and healing will be our three tenets and main practices, in the tradition of the Zen Peacemakers founded by Bernie Glassman Roshi. In this sense our approach will be similar to street retreats and bearing witness retreats. Ingredients of the retreat will be visiting 'ecodharmic' places, meeting with people connected to the ecocrises, connecting with nature, meditation, rituals and council circles (talking stick circles). For more backgrounds on the Eco-retreat and Bearing Witness, see here: <https://bearing-witness.eu>.

The international group of meditation practitioners and Zen Peacemakers who are organizing this pilgrimage consists of Svenja Wildflower Hollweg, Dieter Mueller and Patrick Avalokiteshvara van der Hofstad.



This pilgrimage is a next activity in a series of earlier events. In August 2022 we held an Eco-retreat in Lützerath in the Spirit of the Zen Peacemakers. The village in the Rhenish Brown coal area was destined to make way for the huge lignite mining operations. The residents had already been bought out, but climate activists were still occupying the village and the woods nearby. After a big demonstration on Saturday and a clash with the police, eventually on Sunday January 15, 2023 the village was evacuated by the police. On April 30, 2023 we returned to Lützerath with a small group for a day of reflection. In September 2023 we hiked for a weekend in the Ahrtal valley, which had been destroyed by floods in July 2021- a first eco-pilgrimage. On January 14, 2024 we returned to Lützerath again to gather with activists and perform buddhist ceremonies for the 1 year commemoration of the eviction.



People who are interested in participating in the retreat can send an e-mail to pilgrimage@eco-dharma.de.

Reports from past pilgrimages and ecoretreats can be found here: www.bearing-witness.eu

Practical information:

- Dates: 8.5 until 12.5.2023
- Location: Hambacher Wald, Buir, near Hambach opencast lignite mine and other ecodharmic places in the region, Nörvenich, Ahrtal
- Participants: no minimum, maximum 20
- Language: English (although meetings with people may be in German and will be translated for whoever needs it)
- Costs: we estimate 250€ - 300€ for transports, food and lodging along the way during the pilgrimage, please consider making a donation to support participants with limited financial resources
- If you have concerns or physical limitations, just talk to us, we will look for possibilities that are suitable for you.



Black and white photos by Harry Aldering