



westernchanfellowship.org

October 2023

NEWSLETTER 47

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND EVENTS

We are continuing to run our regular residential retreat programme, mostly at Shawbottom near Leek in the Peak District. We are continuing to take some precautions against Covid-19 transmission on retreat but these are proving not to be disruptive to retreats. Details are given on the website retreats page.

Forthcoming events are listed inside this newsletter, with updates listed at www.w-c-f.org/Q342

RETREAT FEES FROZEN FOR 2024

We are well aware of the effects of economic pressures on many of you. Instead of increasing retreat fees in line with inflation, for 2024 we will freeze retreat fees at 2023 levels. We will fund this by drawing on our reserves where necessary.

We hope that this measure as well as our supported retreat places - which continue to be available to support those who need financial help to be able to attend retreats - will make our retreats more available to all.

21ST – 26TH OCTOBER: FINDING FREEDOM RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE

5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADERS: ALYSUN JONES AND JULIET HACKNEY. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT

[HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-444](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-444)

This retreat will follow a structure based on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. We will consider each aspect of mindfulness to help participants to enter into the reality of daily experience, reducing the separation which is commonly felt between mind and body, and between individual and environment. Practice will help to bring habitual reactions into awareness and allow participants to gently release them, resulting in greater appreciation of life in the here and now. There will be meditation, working with the body and emotional awareness, connecting with the environment and nature.

11TH – 18TH NOVEMBER: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-445](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-445)

The ancient Chinese Zen practices of investigating Huatou and Gongan (Koan) are best practised in a supportive environment such as this intensive silent Chan retreat, supported by personal interviews. As one becomes deeply absorbed in the practice, mental constructions drop away and one is confronted by a realisation that one does not know the nature of existence and one's fundamental assumptions of life are groundless. Staying with and cultivating this 'doubt', it can become all-consuming 'Great Doubt' which may 'shatter', giving a direct insight into reality which may be what is known as an Enlightenment experience.

2ND – 7TH DECEMBER: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-446](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-446)

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-day retreat you will investigate the question "Who am I?" within a standard retreat framework, using silent meditation in conjunction with a unique method of verbal inquiry. This format allows you to use words to go beyond words and thereby enter the main gate of Chan.

The intensive nature of this process of inquiry drives each practitioner into a self-presentation that is difficult to experience in other ways. To guide and support you, personal interviews with the teachers are offered regularly throughout the retreat. With whole-hearted engagement this retreat may lead to the acceptance of self, the experience of 'self at ease', and may even provide an opportunity for direct insight into the ground of being.

6TH – 13TH JANUARY: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-448](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-448)

Silent Illumination is a profound meditation practice which leads to a mind of great calmness and insight, using ancient Chinese Zen methods which are just as applicable to the modern West. It is the origin of the Japanese Soto Zen practice of Shikantaza but is approached somewhat differently and full instruction will be given.

This seven-night silent retreat is an opportunity to learn and deepen this practice through intensive meditation, with instruction and personal guidance by individual interviews with an experienced teacher. Whether or not a breakthrough to Enlightenment may occur, establishing a practice gives a firm basis for subsequent ongoing mindfulness and compassion in everyday life.

10TH – 17TH FEBRUARY: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-449](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-449)

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30TH MARCH – 4TH APRIL: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-450](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-450)

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SHAWBOTTOM BARN OWLS



We have had a successful year with our barn owls. Our nesting pair laid four eggs, all of which hatched. Typically with barn owls only one or two hatchlings will survive and fledge, but in our case all four prospered and all four fledged successfully.

25TH MAY – 1ST JUNE: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-451](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-451)

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22ND – 29TH JUNE: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-454](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-454)

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27TH JULY – 1ST AUGUST: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-452](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-452)

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17TH – 24TH AUGUST: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-453](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-453)

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DAILY/WEEKLY ONLINE AND LOCAL EVENTS

On most days of the week there are online events available for you to attend. Please see the list at <http://w-c-f.org/Q728> Even when these events are arranged by a WCF local group leader they are open to attendance from anyone including those outside their area.

We also have a Western Chan Fellowship Practice Support Group on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/257812581073712>

And we have a long-established mailing list called WCFtalk, where you can discuss Chan topics with others. Apply for membership at: <https://groups.io/g/wcftalk/>

Details of local group meeting schedules and events can be found at <http://w-c-f.org/Q3>

KENT DAY RETREATS

The Kent Chan group is offering regular day retreats. Every three months the group meets at the St Benedict's Centre in West Malling, which is easily accessible by train from London. The final date for 2023 is Sunday 3 December. On the months between these in-person day retreats, the group also hosts a half-day online retreat. The group is also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/kentandmedwaychan>

LONDON DAY RETREAT

London Chan Group are holding a weekend retreat (non-residential), led by Kitty d'Costa, on 20th/21st January 2024, 10am – 7:00pm. The venue is at Colindale Gardens NW9 4DS. For further details and to book contact Kitty: londonchan@westernchanfellowship.org

ONLINE INTRODUCTION TO CHAN BUDDHISM

WCF has piloted a four week online course to create a stepping stone for newcomers to Chan, also for not so new comers who might want to learn more about Chan history or for those who just wish to reconnect. Alysun Jones and Edd Phillips presented Zoom sessions on four weekly evenings, giving an introduction to meditation, Buddhism in general and Chan specifically.

The course is planned to run again free of charge starting on Tuesday 9th Jan 2024, 8pm – 9.30pm on Zoom. Look out on the WCF website or Facebook group for registration opening soon and share it with someone who you think might be interested e.g. someone who might be new to meditation, or who has done a mindfulness course and would like to follow this up, or who has been curious about the Chan retreats you have been to ... and perhaps you might want to sign up yourself.

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