



westernchanfellowship.org

December 2023

NEWSLETTER 48

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 which also lists upcoming events and any updates: 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.

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)

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.



JASON ROUSE

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)

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.

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)

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.

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)

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.

17TH – 24TH AUGUST: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

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

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.

ONLINE INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION, BUDDHISM AND CHAN

There is no charge. Booking: <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-455>

This course, consisting of four weekly online 90 minute evening sessions, is an opportunity to become familiar with a meditation practice and to learn about Buddhism and Chan. The course covers core teachings of the Buddha as well as the roots of Chan Buddhism and Chan practices, namely Silent Illumination and Koans. Both were transmitted from China to Japan centuries ago, where they became Zen. You are encouraged to practice between the weekly sessions and will be able to reflect on your experience in an online group setting.

The course will help you to establish a meditation practice, know more about the Western Chan Fellowship and to decide whether you might want to go to a residential retreat to deepen your meditation experience.



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>

BRISTOL DAY RETREAT

The Bristol group will be running a day retreat in April 2024 (precise date tbc). It will be led by Jiva Masheder, a Brighton-based meditation and mindfulness teacher. Jiva also teaches at Gaia House.

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 dates for 2024 are Sundays 17th March, 2nd June, 15th September, 8th 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/groups/kentchangroup>

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 or 07506 810 761.

EUROPEAN BUDDHIST UNION

The Western Chan Fellowship is a member organisation of the European Buddhist Union. This is the link for the EBU website with information on the areas of activity that the EBU is focusing on <https://europeanbuddhistunion.org/areas-of-activity> including Teaching Buddhism in Schools, Ecodharma, Animal Welfare, Buddhist Women, Chaplaincy Network, Buddhist Youth Network, Interfaith. Any Buddhist in Europe (Brexit didn't alter continental geography so the UK is included!) can get involved in these projects.

Our representatives are Jake Lyne (j.lyne@europeanbuddhistunion.org) and Jan Mead (drjanmead@me.org). Jake is an EBU council member with particular responsibility for the Ecodharma Network and Jan is a member of the EBU Ethics Committee.