



westernchanfellowship.org

March 2026

NEWSLETTER 54

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP NEWS AND EVENTS

We have extended our retreat programme up to early 2027.

We are continuing to take some non-intrusive precautions against Covid-19 transmission on 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 REDUCED

We continue to review our retreat fees to make them more affordable. Our fees for the second half of 2025 were lower than in the first half of 2025 and we are continuing these lower fees throughout 2026.

Supported retreat places continue to be available to support those who need financial help to be able to attend retreats. There is no means-testing – simply select the lower fee option when booking.

WESTERN CHAN FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM will be held at Shawbottom late morning on Saturday 13th June. It will be preceded by the annual Teacher's Address. Detailed timings will be notified nearer the time.

As previously we will try to arrange online connection and participation for members who can't attend the in-person meeting. However we should clarify that, as per our constitution, online participation is 'observer' status only and does not confer voting rights. We could make exceptions to this during Covid restrictions but those no longer apply. This also means that failure of online connection does not invalidate the meeting.

As in previous years, there will be an open weekend at Shawbottom on that weekend – see next page for details

25TH APRIL – 2ND MAY: ZEN KOAN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-490](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-490)

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.

23RD – 28TH MAY: EVERYDAY ZEN SILENT MEDITATION RETREAT – 5 NIGHTS

LEADER: ALYSUN JONES, JULIET HACKNEY. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-491](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-491)

This 5-night silent meditation retreat applies the early teachings of the Buddha, which give guidance on how to live our lives in a completely fulfilling way. The retreat is suitable for newcomers and experienced practitioners alike.

Practising meditation, including guided meditations, may help to raise your awareness of and settle your habitual reactions. This can increase the potential for a more direct appreciation of the here and now, leading to the possibility of experiencing greater clarity and freedom in everyday life.

5TH – 7TH JUNE: WEEKEND RESIDENTIAL RETREAT – 2 NIGHTS

LEADER: ALYSUN JONES. VENUE: KARUNA, DARTMOOR, DEVON [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-499](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-499)

A residential weekend retreat at Karuna Dartmoor, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of South Devon Chan group. The themes addressed on the weekend will be the eight worldly concerns, and the liberation offered by the three marks of existence of not self, impermanence and dukkha.

OPEN WEEKEND AT SHAWBOTTOM 12TH – 14TH JUNE

Once again, Simon is inviting WCF members to stay at Shawbottom free of charge during the period Friday 12th - Sunday 24th June, to coincide with the WCF AGM on 13th June. This is for socialising, sangha building, and to give an opportunity for exploring the area such as by taking longer walks than is possible in retreat walk periods.

You may stay one night or two, as suits you. Book in advance by email to teacher@westernchanfellowship.org, stating who is in your party and whether you need car parking space(s). It is on a self-catering basis - bring your own food or coordinate with others to share meals with each other.

4TH – 11TH JULY: SILENT ILLUMINATION ZEN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADER: REBECCA LI. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-492](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-492)

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.



1ST – 6TH AUGUST: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5 NIGHTS

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-493](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-493)

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-night 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.

5TH – 12TH SEPTEMBER: ZEN KOAN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADERS: SIMON CHILD, JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-500](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-500)

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.

SEPTEMBER 26TH – OCTOBER 1ST: ZEN RETREAT IN THE CHAN TRADITION – 5 NIGHTS

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: TROSSACHS TRYST, CENTRAL SCOTLAND [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-501](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-501)



The profound Chan meditation practice of mozhao* or in the words of Master Sheng Yen 'method of no method' is the origin of the Zen practice of Shikantaza or 'just sitting'. In this retreat we will go back to the root and practise Zen adopting the original Chan approach to meditation, tailored to be applicable to modern times.

This five-night silent retreat in central Scotland is suitable for beginners and experienced meditators. Intensive meditation, meditation guidance and individual interviews with an experienced teacher create the conditions for personal reflection and a deep exploration of this practice. Mozhao meditation is a doorway to awakening of insight and compassion and stabilises mindfulness, leading to beneficial effects in everyday life.

* Mozhao was translated by Rev. Jiyu Kennett as Serene Reflection

24TH – 31ST OCTOBER: SILENT ILLUMINATION ZEN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-502](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-502)

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.

28TH NOVEMBER – 3RD DECEMBER: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5 NIGHTS

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-503](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-503)

Who am I? Thoroughly confronting this question can take us directly to the centre of our being. Over the course of this five-night 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.



9TH – 16TH JANUARY 2027: ZEN KOAN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-504](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-504)

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.

13TH – 20TH FEBRUARY 2027: SILENT ILLUMINATION ZEN RETREAT – 7 NIGHTS

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-505](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-505)

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.

DEFIBRILLATOR AT SHAWBOTTOM

Western Chan Fellowship has received, free of charge, a fully automated defibrillator to install at Shawbottom, as part of the British Heart Foundation's (BHF) programme of distribution to social organisations including faith groups. Given the remoteness of Shawbottom and the distance from other local defibrillators this is of potential benefit to attendees at Shawbottom retreats and other events.



More than that, it is a 'Public Access Defibrillator'. It is registered with the local ambulance service so that they can direct members of the public to come and collect it if they need it. This should not cause any disturbance to retreats because anyone collecting it will grab and run – they won't hang about to chat.

BHF provides free 15-minute online training in CPR and Defibrillation – do it now, so that you are ready for if it is needed. <https://www.bhf.org.uk/revivr>

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>

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 CHAN GROUP

Details about the weekly meeting and the day retreats can be found at <http://w-c-f.org/Q41>

THURSDAY EVENING MEETINGS

The Kent Chan Group now meets weekly in a hybrid format, both online and in person at Bodhicharya UK Buddhist Meditation Centre in Rochester.

DAY RETREATS WITH KENT CHAN GROUP

The regular quarterly programme of day retreats continues, sometimes at St Benedict's Centre in West Malling and sometimes at Bodhicharya Buddhist Centre in Rochester.

DAY RETREAT WITH BODHICHARYA LONDON AT THE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

On Saturday 16th May, Stuart McLeod will be leading an Introduction to Chan day retreat as a guest of Bodhicharya London, hosted at the Buddhist Society near Victoria. You can find more details at <https://bodhicharya-london.org/day-retreats/>.

ANCESTORS MEMORIAL DAY JULY 11TH AT MAENLLWYD

Sophie Muir and Stamati Crook are arranging a memorial celebration. They open invitations to join them at Maenllwyd to honour our Founding Teacher John Crook, and lineage and family ancestors.

The day offers space for remembrance, gratitude, and reflection through ceremony, chanting, and meditation. (Participants are welcome to bring names or photos of loved ones to be included in the memorial offering.)

The programme begins with lunch at 12.30pm, followed by a memorial ceremony:

- Light offering and procession from 2pm
- 2.45pm for 3.00pm - 3.30pm: Chanting
- 3.30pm – 4.00pm Meditation
- 4.00pm - 5.00pm Sharing circle
- 5.00pm – 6.00pm Afternoon Tea
- 6.00pm Close

All are welcome. Please register to attend by email to Sophie Muir sophie@gearmill.org stating whether you will arrive in time for lunch.

