



westernchanfellowship.org

October 2024

## NEWSLETTER 50

### 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](http://www.w-c-f.org/Q342)

#### 2<sup>ND</sup> – 9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-464](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-464)

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.

#### 30<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER – 5<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-465](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-465)

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.

## **4<sup>TH</sup> – 11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT**

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-466](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-466)

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.

## **15<sup>TH</sup> – 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH: WESTERN ZEN RETREAT – 5-NIGHT RETREAT**

LEADER: JAKE LYNE. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-469](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-469)

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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.

## **12<sup>TH</sup> – 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL: ILLUMINATING THE MIND – 7-NIGHT RETREAT**

LEADER: SIMON CHILD. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-470](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-470)

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## 24<sup>TH</sup> – 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY: INVESTIGATING KOANS – 7-NIGHT RETREAT

LEADER: FIONA NUTTALL. VENUE: SHAWBOTTOM, PEAK DISTRICT [HTTP://W-C-F.ORG/Q487-471](http://w-c-f.org/Q487-471)

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## ONLINE INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION, BUDDHISM AND CHAN

There is no charge. Booking: <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-468>

Following the successful delivery of an online course in January 2024, we will deliver this online course again in January 2025. The course aims to support new members to Chan or not so new comers, who might want to learn more about Chan history or just reconnect.

The course will be delivered by David Valentine-Hagart and Guy Roberts on four weekly evenings, giving an introduction to meditation, Buddhism in general and Chan specifically.

The course will be free of charge and will start on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025, 8pm - 9.30pm on Zoom.

Look out for details on WCF website <http://w-c-f.org/Q487-468> or Facebook group and, please, share it with anyone who you think might be interested. For example, new members to your group, 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 Chan retreats.



## COMPASSION IN CRISIS: BUDDHIST SKILFUL MEANS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

A talk by Jake Lyne

At a Leader's Retreat in February 2023, a recording was made of this talk by Jake which incorporates video content from other sources to illustrate the points made in the talk. A 23-minute edited version is available on the WCF website. Visit <http://w-c-f.org/Q551>



The talk opens with a quote from William Shatner of Star Trek fame, the oldest person to go into space, who was profoundly shocked by the contrast between the beauty of earth from space and his understanding that life is in peril from climate change and loss of biodiversity.

Jake outlines the scale and seriousness of the multiple crises facing life on earth, due to fossil fuel use, waste, deforestation and other factors and draws on Buddhist wisdom to suggest ways of managing our emotional responses such as anger, despair and denial.

When not blocked by emotion, naive optimism or disabling pessimism we can find healthy ways to respond using our full energy and determination. Responses may involve activism, changes to lifestyle, talking to people, supporting others who are involved in climate related activities, contribution of relevant skills and giving our time.

The talk ends by referring to what John Crook used to call 'vow power' and with reference to Buddhist "Ecosattva Vows".

## 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 remaining date for 2024 is Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> 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>

## FINGER WRITING

Long time Fellowship member and software developer of the Fellowship's database systems, Hugh Carroll, has continued his poetic output in a third volume 'Finger Writing'. Previous work has appeared in the New Chan Forum on many occasions. The usual anecdotes, funnies and more philosophical musings appear. After 'taking the backward step' in meditation, this work is a 'taking the forward step' of full self-expression. All details at <https://hugle.uk>



*This announcement is for information only and does not constitute endorsement.*

## BUDDHIST TEACHERS IN EUROPE MEETING

This year the Buddhist Teachers in Europe meeting was held at the Dharmaloka Chan Centre in Croatia. Twenty-one teachers attended including Jake Lyne from the WCF. There were two themes - practices of different traditions and ecodharma, Jake's session was the latter.



The practices included chanting practice by Soka Gakkai, a Japanese Shinto practice for past generations, a Pure Land practice, Triratna practices and each morning Dharma Master Žarko Andričević led a Chan meditation session. John Crook, among others, was memorialised in the Shinto practice session.

## WCF QUESTIONNAIRE - RETREATS

**Please respond promptly, as we will be analysing the results about two weeks after you receive this newsletter.**

It is two years since we restarted residential retreats following the ending of pandemic restrictions, and we are noticing that retreat booking numbers are lower than pre-pandemic. Clearly one factor may be cost-of-living pressures, and to try to help with that we have increased the number of supported places offered on each retreat. Also, we have frozen retreat fees for 2024 and will increase them by less than inflation for 2025.

We are keen to understand the various other factors that affect people attending retreats, and so we would appreciate it enormously if you could answer these few questions. Hopefully this will help us to plan a retreat program which allows as many people as possible to participate, if they so wish.

Follow this link to access the online version of the questionnaire: <http://w-c-f.org/Q766>

If you would prefer to complete a paper version please email Sian Thomas at [sianyorkchan@gmail.com](mailto:sianyorkchan@gmail.com) to request that.



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