



Finding Common Ground January, 2021

Common Ground Navigates 2020

A year like this brings into focus what's most important. More than ever, the land opened rich opportunities to nourish our bodies and beings, connect with others (in person!), care for the forest, and give ground to build a multi-purpose barn for the farm and community events. Our Circle meetings went virtual, allowing us to co-create with members from near and far. And, we continued to drill down in our efforts to establish a village that cleaves to our ecological, social, and economic values.

Are we reaching for the stars? Sometimes! Some forty people came for the Winter Solstice Astronomical Event where we viewed the closest conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the night sky in 800 years! Jeffry and Anthony trained their telescopes such that we could see the rings of Saturn (just like in the pictures!) and four of Jupiter's moons—how glorious. Many thanks to Sally Greene, an Orange County Commissioner, who offered her take on this experience in a blog post ([click here](#)).

It's never been more clear that humans need to reach for ways of living that foster connection, aliveness, thriving, and balance with each other and the natural world. The up-tick in membership we've experienced is one reflection that we're on the right track. But it's not easy being green! We're persisting. And we could use some help. So if you feel inspired by what's happening here, come on in—your input will make a contribution extending beyond yourself; to the children, and to our beautiful and priceless Earth. Read on and **check out the photos at the end**—there's a place for **you** at CGEV!



Stomping the crispy black bean pods in the barn (photo by Caleb)

COMMON GROUND CALENDAR



Anthony focuses in on Jupiter & Saturn in the solstice sky (photo by Caleb) Banner above: double reverse weave, using one dogbane rope and one yucca slice (photo & cordage by Margret)

GET INVOLVED!

Contact any of the Circle leaders listed below—they'll be happy to talk with you! **Note: all events are open to everyone unless otherwise indicated. Most (but not all!) Circle meetings are happening via Zoom. RSVP is essential!**

NEW GOOGLE CALENDAR! Ren has set up a Google Calendar for your convenience (Yea, Ren!). Here's the recurring link: <https://tinyurl.com/CGEV-Calendar>

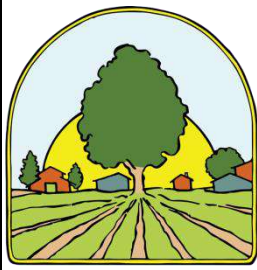
LAND STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

Sunday, January 3, 4:00-6:00pm

Observers and prospective members are welcome

RSVP to Randy about participating and venue:

doddDOTrandyATgmailDOTcom



COMMON GROUND
— ECOVILLAGE —

THE NAME

In April, we retired the name Hart's Mill and selected a new name that more fully reflects our vision and values—Common Ground Ecovillage.

THE FARM

Farmers Jeffry and Margret worked flat-out this summer in so many ways, not the least supervising the Community Farm Initiative workers and integrating a NEW FARMER on the land. Doug Jones strove mightily to move his entire life to our community without a pause in stride so as not to disappoint his CSA members. Full-on farming was a sight to behold by summer, with all three large beds burgeoning with crops. Among Doug's offerings were peanuts and an experimental crop of sesame!



Doug and the gorgeous sweet potatoes (photo by Caleb)

THE BARN

The Land Stewardship and Planning, Design, and Development Circles outdid themselves this year. As the pandemic raged on, several stalwart members labored from June to December to design and implement an ambitious barn-and-bathhouse complex. Many hands, hearts, and minds chipped in with the design, funding, site prep, and building. George's construction and supervision skills were absolutely key. Anthony and Paul provided ever-present & skillful oversight and support, with help from Jeffry, Jay, Robbie, and others. Brandon and family/students helped get things going and spent a week working on the bathhouse, and Hope, Margret, and others helped to make the containers beautiful. It's still a work in progress but is already fulfilling crucial farm and community needs. Head to the bottom of this calendar for photo spread honoring the people and the process.

RACIAL AWARENESS READING & REFLECTION CIRCLE

Membership & Marketing Circle

Mondays, 6:30-7:30pm, weekly

Contact Lisa to sign up and receive a link:

iberley@yahoo.com

Free of charge, & donations requested once-a-month

PLANNING, DESIGN, & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

Wednesday, January 6, 6:30-8:00pm, via Zoom

RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

The Financial & Legal Circle will join in this meeting

HAPPY HANGOUT WEDNESDAYS

Membership & Marketing Circle

Wednesdays, January 6, 20, 27, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

RSVP to Ren for a recurring Zoom link:

renenberg.cge@gmail.com

*The **NEW** Land, Love, and Laughter group is continuing its weekly event where we join together with smiles, sharing, laughter, and importantly, NO AGENDAS! We have so much fun it's hard to stop at an hour! (January 13th is a Meet & Greet where we welcome new members—how about YOU come, too?)*

MEET & GREET

Membership & Marketing Circle

Wednesday, January 13, 7:00-8:15pm via Zoom

RSVP to Lisa for a link: iberley@yahoo.com

Have you recently heard about us? Want to meet other new members? We'll get to know each other and review some history and basics about CGEV.

Interested? Let's hang out!

MEMBERSHIP & MARKETING CIRCLE

Thursday, January 14, 7-9pm via Zoom

RSVP to Marilyn: marilyngrubbs@gmail.com

Observers are welcome; please contact circle leaders Marilyn Grubbs (marilyngrubbs@gmail.com) or Lisa Berley (iberley@yahoo.com) several days in advance, to receive the Zoom link and documents needed in

THE LAND

Randy, Hope, Jeffry, Margret (mainly) invested many hours reigning in our Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus*) stands. This species has been recognized by an array of botanists, naturalists, herbalists, and foresters (i.e., folks whose opinion means a lot to us) as being a pretty undesirable member of our forest ecosystem and also one that we (and others) have not figured out how to manage well without chemicals. So, after trying some unsuccessful non-chemical approaches, we did some homework, bought the best (most efficacious and least impactful to other species) herbicide, and rolled up our sleeves and hacked and squirted and cut and painted. We'll be monitoring what transpires in 2021.



Margret feeds the wood-chomping monster

Other land activities included the continued implementation of recommendations of our Forest Stewardship Plan through the "Wood Wide Web" project, specifically with a thinning of the forest near the garden, and a "Chip-O-Rama" weekend to turn some of the thinned trees into wood chip stockpiles. We also managed to mill and stockpile some lumber and also creatively used typically forsaken milled tree parts as siding in the barn/bathhouse complex. Last but not least, the network of trails in our forest continues to grow and be more widely used by certain two-legged earthlings.

THE PEOPLE

The CGEV vision statement exhorts us to "live in justice and harmony with each other and the land." Hence, the Governance & Training Circle has focused ever more on cultivating a culture of cooperation with trainings in governance, cooperative skills and conflict navigation. They launched a Simpler Living: Earth Skills Sundays series where Gumby Montgomery guided groups into greater awareness of—and intimacy with—the natural world, the greatest source of balance and cooperation

preparation for the meeting. Note that we will be adding a second meeting each month, on a date TBD.

FRESH TAKE: An in-depth info. session

Membership & Marketing Circle

Saturday, January 16, 4:00-5:30pm via Zoom

RSVP to Lisa: iberley@yahoo.com

Want an up-to-date overview of where CGEV is now, what's next, and how you can get involved and contribute? Hear from other members active in our Circles? This session is for YOU!

SIMPLER LIVING: EARTH SKILLS SUNDAYS

Tracking with Gumby Montgomery

Governance & Training Circle

Sunday, January 17, 11:00am - 1:00pm

RSVP to Maria is a must: mariasilviapini@gmail.com

*We are committed to stop being tourists on this land we are care-takers of. Following the guidance of Gumby Montgomery, this month we'll do more **tracking** (the art and science of reading the world we are a part of). Tracking is always a fresh experience so this will not be a repeat of what we did in November. We'll practice the ancient methods of identification, interpretation, trailing, aging, ecology, and empathy to understand and realize that EVERYTHING is a track. Cash contributions and a barter gift for our guide are required, although no one will be turned down due to lack of funds. Due to COVID restrictions of physical distance this event is limited to 15 people. Your RSVP to **MARIA** is a must: mariasilviapini@gmail.com.*



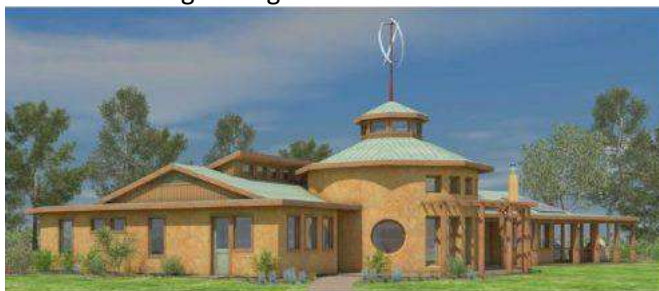
Frilly cabbage fresh from Doug's field (photo by Caleb)

there is! The Membership & Marketing Circle has sponsored dismantling racism workshops and offers a weekly Racial Equity Book Group, bringing together folks from several communities to examine white fragility and supremacy together. M&M has worked tirelessly to connect with new members online, helping them learn about CGEV, get to know each other, socialize, and get involved with CGEV activities. They've organized several events on the land, including July 4th and Halloween celebrations and two member-advancement ceremonies held under the boughs of our magnificent oak tree.



THE VILLAGE

It's been an intense year. The Planning, Design, & Development Circle (PDD) established a *Raising Sights* project, diving deep into how we can build our village to ensure that we're being maximally ambitious while remaining realistic and affordable. Guided by criteria synched with our Principles & Intentions, they researched and embraced water independence, committed to building residences with earthen materials (straw bale and/or hempcrete), and energetically pursued greater energy self-reliance. After well over a year of planning and pushing, Katy succeeded in securing off a wastewater System Improvement Permit for CGEV (whew!) A schematic design for the Common House is complete and all designs posted on the website under the Village Design tab.



Common House design

PLANNING, DESIGN, & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

Sunday, January 17, 4:30-6pm via Zoom

RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

Observers are always welcome, with RSVP

GOVERNANCE & TRAINING CIRCLE

Tuesday, January 19, 4:00pm – 6:00pm via Zoom

RSVP to Hope: hopenatrix@fastmail.com

You are welcome to observe! If this time is difficult for you, please contact Hope.

FINANCIAL & LEGAL CIRCLE

Thursday, January 21, 6:30-9:00pm, via Zoom

RSVP to Paul for a link: voss@hawkweed.net

There are many important and exciting activities needing assistance so we encourage you to think about permanently joining in the work of our Circle. Enthusiasm is the only requirement. No need for deep background in either law or finance—just the desire to learn and contribute as you are able.

JUICY COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Facilitated sessions supervised by Laird Schaub and Maria Silvia Pini, via Zoom

Friday, January 22, 6:30-8:30pm

Saturday, January 23, 2:00-4:00pm

Sunday, January 24, 11:00-1:00pm

RSVP to Hope: hopenatrix@fastmail.com

*This is a unique and valuable opportunity for us to safely express our concerns, feelings, and needs about our community and learn together to develop better approaches around power dynamics, transparency, conflict and communication so that we have the tools to tackle big decisions and any issues that arise. This Integrative Facilitation Training (IFT) is a two-year intensive experiential course for students to learn high level skills in conflict resolution and group facilitation for intentional communities like ours. **Participation will be limited to 15 people per session**, so keep an eye out for further details by email from M&M in the coming days. You are encouraged to participate in all three sessions but may choose one or two.*

PDD is somewhat stalled in further site planning and development until CGEV commits to a viable ownership and financing model. Speaking of which, the Financial & Legal Circle has faced changing conditions that caused them to re-think important decisions concerning our home ownership strategy. Given the current climate of both rising costs and uncertain financing, they are struggling to see a way through towards a solution both financially feasible and in keeping with our commitment to affordable housing. And the Operational Leader, Paul Voss, is stepping down after eight years of service (though he plans to continue to be a member of the Circle). F&L and PDD are increasingly joining forces due to the interdependence of the planning and financial issues. This is where the rubber meets the road for our village development—an exciting place to be for anyone who wants to help to keep the village on the tracks.

IN THE KNOW

Have you read/seen/heard something inspiring lately that you'd like to share with the community? Please send in your recommendations to [Hope](#).

Marsha sent a link to an *On Being* podcast titled *Love is the Motive*, featuring Bryan Stevenson, director of the Equal Justice Initiative and author of *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. Bryan talks about how to embrace what's right and corrective, redemptive and restorative — and an insistence that each of us is more than the worst thing we've done. <https://onbeing.org/programs/bryan-stevenson-love-is-the-motive/>

LOCAL EVENTS TO EXPAND OUR SOCIAL & CULTURAL HORIZONS

Is something happening that you want our members to know about? Please send your listing to Hope by the 25th of each month: hopenatrix@fastmail.com

Racial Equity Institute Training

Sponsored by Organizing Against Racism (OAR)
We **strongly recommend** these 2-day trainings as a way to begin a shared conversation about racism and social justice at Common Ground Ecovillage. Check OARalliance.org for details.

Compassionate Connection (aka Non-Violent Communication or NVC): Wednesday, January 27, 7:00 - 8:30 pm via Zoom. This is the "Chapel Hill" NVC training/practice group, held online until further notice. Facilitated by Marilyn Grubbs and Lila Rosa. For more information, email marilyngrubbs@gmail.com

PLANNING, DESIGN, & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

Wednesday, January 27, 6:30-8pm via Zoom

RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

Observers are always welcome, with RSVP

GENERAL CIRCLE

Thursday, January 28, 7:00-9:15pm, via Zoom

RSVP to Bailey: baileygirly@gmail.com

We welcome observers. RSVP two days in advance to receive the agenda, Zoom link, and documents

LAST SATURDAY

Saturday, January 30, 3:00-5:00pm

Topic to be decided—stay tuned!

This precious time is open for any Circle to take advantage of. And, if a member has something you want to teach that is linked to our vision, mission, and/or aims, please contact Hope:

hopenatrix@fastmail.com



Rain is coming! Margret, Jeffry, and Paul wrangle the black bean dragon up to the barn's second story for further drying and stomping. 61 pounds of beans came out of these small packages. Many thanks to all who helped with the harvest! (photo by Caleb)

A Year in the Life of COMMON GROUND ECOVILLAGE

Photos by Margret Mueller, Caleb Buchbinder, Margaret Anderson, Doug Jones, Randy Dodd, & Hope Horton



Top: Doug propped a ladder up on a sweetgum tree south of the farm and snapped this panorama. L-R: remember when we could share a meal at the Nest? Anthony reading his dreamy riff on Common Ground at the Associate Member ceremony; Jeffry sights Jupiter and Saturn for a waiting crowd of gazers on the Solstice; puttyroot orchid in full bloom

Top to bottom: The pines that were removed to make way for the barn were milled on the land, sawn into useful sizes for future building; Paul and Rainey work the wood chipper



Left column, L-R: Earth Skills Sundays with Gumby Montgomery, tracking; finding edible plants; high summer oak; crew cleaning up the detritus of the soils testing process; ripe elderberries; jack-in-the-pulpit; peanuts, anyone? Rattlesnake plantain orchids
Right column, T-B: Seeing Stars Farm juicy fruits; Community Farm Initiative team plants 600 feet of root veggies; Students from Iowa place slash siding from our own pines on the bathhouse walls; Doug walks towards the sun

Building the Barn, from June to December, 2020

Starring design-builders George, Anthony, Paul, Brandon, Jeffry, Jay, Randy, Robert, Dave, Josh, & Becca

*Featuring artist & painter Margret with assistance from Hope, Bob, Lisa, Margaret, Marilyn, & Amy
& a host of supporting characters*



"Before" Two tractor sheds and a shipping container



Buckhorn Tree service comes to clear the site



After removing trees and one shed



Anthony marks the spot for the bath house



Hauling the salvaged telephone poles



Paul digs a hole for 1 of the 7 poles



Brandon straightens the center pole



The second shipping container, which serves as the east wall, is delivered



Leveling the shipping container (!)



Placing the cross beam—very carefully



The bones are in place



George's capable hand



Putting in the second story floor



The stairway's in place



The corner room takes shape



Paul and Anthony work on the bath house roof and floor



Fabulous work crew gets to work on the roof



On goes the metal roofing



Anthony gets high with paint



Bob and Paul prime the shipping container



Lisa and Margret stain the siding with a sky blue color



Anthony has his head in the clouds he just created



Margret pencils in her mural outlines



Margret colors in the sun's rays



The Sunset Mural is complete on the western wall



Paul & Anthony put up slash siding (it's heavy!)



The bath house now nearly finished, with running water



Can we sit down now and enjoy the view???



Sunrise/sunset concept design with sample color palettes