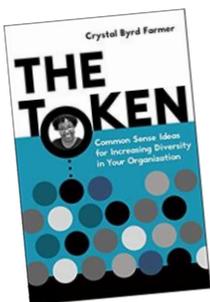




Finding Common Ground January, 2022

Up Front

While the calendar looks forward to 2022, this newsletter looks back, providing an **overview of each Circle's 2021 endeavors**. We've come a LONG WAY, and the rough brushstrokes are offered below. But if you want the whole picture, complete with cool photos, **click on the link provided for each Circle**.



ALL members are STRONGLY encouraged to come to a session with diversity consultant, Crystal Byrd Farmer, on January 8, 4-6pm, via Zoom. We'll dive into the question, defining what the crucial word, "justice", in our vision statement really means to us. See the calendar description and [RSVP](#)

Have you submitted your **HOUSING RESERVATION AGREEMENT?**

The Planning & Development Circle is requesting that **anyone who wishes to eventually reside at Common Ground Ecovillage make their intention known**. This is URGENT, as we must soon demonstrate to our lender that Common Ground is not just a beautiful dream, but that people are actually committed to actualizing that dream. The Reservation Agreement was sent to all CGEV Members in late December. If you are a "Friend" of CGEV and wish to see this form (plus an accompanying FAQ on the topic), please contact [Paul](#). We are delighted to see the forms and deposits arriving daily, but our aim of receiving 40-50 reservations is still a distant (but achievable!) goal. **We urge you to attend to this matter NOW**. The list of individuals and families planning to reside at CGEV is now being created.

Farmer Doug's CSA is seeking new subscribers to enjoy the spectacular array of seasonal produce available. Read more under **Member Happenings** at the bottom of the right column after the calendar listings.)

COMMON GROUND CALENDAR



Jeffrey, Jess, Tayler, Anthony, & Michelle enthusiastically commence to rake and trim the trails! Banner above: Reflecting darkness and light at the pond (Photo by Jess)

GET INVOLVED

♦ *Contact any of the Circle leaders listed below—they'll be happy to talk with you! **All events are open to everyone unless otherwise indicated, and you must RSVP!***

♦ *Most (but not all) Circle meetings are happening via Zoom. For in-person events, masks are recommended for all and required for those who are not vaccinated.*

♦ **Google Calendar Link:** <https://tinyurl.com/CGEV-Calendar>
To add an event, email Ren at ren.enberg2@gmail.com with "Google Calendar Request" in the subject line. Thanks, Ren!

COMMUNITY EVENTS SNAPSHOT

♦ **Racial Awareness Reading and Reflection Group**,
Every Monday, 6:30 - 7:30 pm

♦ **★ Community Conversation on the meaning of Justice, ★ Saturday, January 8, 4-6pm**

♦ **Heart Sharing Circle**, January 14, 7-9pm

♦ **Fresh Take Info Session**, January 15, 4-5:30pm

♦ **Simpler Living: Earth Skills Sunday—The wonders of Biochar!** January 16, 3pm onward

♦ **Last Saturday**, topic TBA, January 29, 3-5pm

CIRCLE STORIES FROM 2021

Land Stewardship Circle



Farm-grown garlic drying in the solar-powered barn (photo by Varun)

There are many stories that could and should be told about what transpired on the land at Common Ground in 2021. Here are few headlines to inspire you to [read more here](#), complete with photos from 2021:

- ♦ The beautiful blossoming of the expanding garden and the many contributions of the gardeners/farmers, seeing Stars farm, Doug, Caleb & Lara.
- ♦ Flourishing of the Land Stewardship Circle with members stepping up in powerful and generous ways to support the farm, land, and building projects.
- ♦ A substantial and multipurpose barn, designed and built by hand mainly by people over 70!
- ♦ Planting of the first fruit trees and shrubs and creating pollinator gardens. The Tree of Heaven taming project continuing into year two.
- ♦ Maintenance and improvements on the 4 miles of trails with new signs coming soon, courtesy of Michelle.
- ♦ A Biochar kiln landed on the land and was fired several times, thanks to Randy.

On the horizon: further explorations of what it means to be an agrarian community and live under the umbrella of how to best care for this particular patch of the larger common Gaian ground in the months and years to come and for the seven generations yet to be born. [Read the whole story with luscious pictures here.](#)



Bees feast on broccolini blossoms (photo by Lisa)

- ♦ **Take a Hike!** January 30, time & place TBA
- ♦ **Mid-Winter/Imbolc Ceremony,** January 30, 3-5pm

RACIAL AWARENESS READING & REFLECTION GROUP

Membership Circle

Every Monday, 6:30-7:30pm

This Group is reading My Grandmother's Hands, by Resmaa Menakem. Newcomers are welcome. To sign up & receive a Zoom link, contact [Lisa](#).

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

- Tuesday, January 4, 5:00-7:00pm
- Sunday, January 16, 6:30-8:30pm
- Wednesday, January 26, 6:30-8:30pm

RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

All meetings are via Zoom. We are seeking new members and observers are very welcome.



Jane, Kira, Anthony, Ruth, Laura, Amy, & Margaret enjoying an invigorating hike on a beautiful December day (photo by Kathleen)

MARKETING & PROMOTION CIRCLE

Every Wednesday, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom

RSVP to Ren: renenberg.cge@gmail.com

Seeking creatives and those with interest in outreach, visibility and marketing to share this essential work and increasingly urgent work. RSVP for Zoom link and meeting/work plan.

MEMBERSHIP CIRCLE

- Friday, January 7, 3-5pm via Zoom
- Friday, January 21, 3-5pm via Zoom

RSVP to Lisa: welcom@commonground.eco

New members are very welcome to visit!

Membership Circle



The July Celebration Open House potluck

Headline news is that the Membership & Marketing Circle has divided into two equivalent Functional Circles, giving each the ability to focus on their very vital—and very different—tasks. The Membership Circle has evolved with new members who have challenged us to re-think or re-prioritize some of our initiatives. Here are some notables from 2021. [Click here for more.](#)

- ♦ We're looking at ways to **simplify the membership structure** and advancement process.
- ♦ A high priority is to **promote a welcoming, warm, and gently curious culture** in our community. We're listening closely to our members and responding in many ways.
- ♦ The **buddy system** is evolving so that it's more effective, sustainable, and fun!
- ♦ The monthly **Open Houses** have been a great way to introduce new people to the land, our vision, and other members. The July and October Open Houses were particularly spectacular celebrations!
- ♦ **Cultivating a diverse membership across many spectrums** is a joy and a challenge. How can marginalized people live authentic lives at CGEV with acceptance and safety? Of the many steps we're taking, **contracting with a diversity specialist, Crystal Byrd Farmer**, is among the most exciting so far. Community-wide learning with Crystal will begin in January.
- ♦ Where there are people, there is conflict. We're attuned to the need to **become more proactive and skilled in relationship repair**.
- ♦ We've created many opportunities for people to connect with each other in a variety of ways—one way to build "community glue!" [Read more here.](#)



★COMMUNITY CONVERSATION on the MEANING of JUSTICE facilitated by CRYSTAL BYRD FARMER★

Membership Circle

Saturday, January 8, 4-6pm, via Zoom

RSVP to: welcome@commonground.eco

*Crystal is a leader in diversity and equity training for intentional communities across the country. We are very excited about gathering together with her as a community to fully engage with our Vision: "a world in which people live in justice and harmony with each other and the land." Together, we will construct the definition of justice that will guide our lives in the community. **ALL member voices are important in this process—please participate if at all possible!***

LAND STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

Tuesday, January 11, 7pm via Zoom

RSVP to Randy: dodd.randy@gmail.com

Be sure to RSVP as meeting details may change! Interested in joining? Contact Randy.



Barred owl, hanging out by McGowan Creek (photo by Michelle)

GOVERNANCE & TRAINING CIRCLE

Thursday, January 13, 5:30-7:30 via Zoom

RSVP to Hope: hopematrix@fastmail.com

We're seeking new members, particularly those with training, facilitation, and administrative skills.

HEART SHARING CIRCLE

Membership Circle

Friday, January 14, 7-9pm via Zoom

RSVP to Ren: renenberg.cge@gmail.com

December's facilitator is Doug Jones. This is an opportunity to get to know other members on a much deeper level as we practice both compassion and

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE



P&D members meet with our engineering and architecture team to finalize the site plan—Katy, Darian, Anthony, Bob, Nick, Bobby, Randy (photo by Paul)

We've come a long way in 2021. Remember when we were exploring several fallback plans because it seemed pretty unlikely that we could achieve financing for an unconventional limited-equity housing cooperative with super-sustainable construction methods? Well, how things change! Here's just a teaser. [Read the whole story with photos here.](#)

- ♦ Paul and Katy have been working with an ardent backer of housing co-ops at Centennial Mortgage, Inc. (CMI) who has charted a course for obtaining a co-op loan guaranteed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). **The loan application has been submitted and the process for achieving funding is, at last, underway.**
- ♦ The Financial and Legal Circle merged with P&D to better coordinate all development functions.
- ♦ This Circle is busy—we had about 35 Circle meetings, gave monthly development updates to the community, met with architects, engineers, and county officials, to prepare for groundbreaking.
- ♦ **Pre-development engineering is now underway,** thanks to the many LLC contributions matched 4-to-1 by our generous Catalyst funder.
- ♦ **The village unit mix** (how many of which dwelling unit, placed where) is nearly finished.
- ♦ **Architecture schematic designs** are being revised to better meet the needs of members. A revised Common House design is underway. (See the current portfolio on the website [here.](#))
- ♦ Especially crucial is **the need to make a major membership advancement push.** Key to the loan approval is our demonstration of sufficient member interest in living in the village, as indicated by increasingly serious financial commitments.

vulnerability. We will offer question prompts to help us get started, and we also share whatever is alive for us in this warm and accepting environment. If you thirst for genuine connection, join us when you can.

FRESH TAKE: An in-depth info session

Membership Circle

Saturday, January 15, 4-5:30pm via Zoom

RSVP to Lisa: Welcome@commonground.eco

This “CGEV 101” session includes an up-to-date overview of where we are now, what’s next, and how you can get involved and contribute. You’ll hear from other members and have a chance to ask questions. It’s a great way learn a lot, fast!

GENERAL CIRCLE

- Sunday, January 9, time TBA
- Thursday, January 27, 6:30-8:30pm (tentative)

RSVP to Bailey: cgev.generalcircle@gmail.com

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

SIMPLER LIVING: Earth Skills Sunday The Wonders of Biochar!

Governance & Training Circle

Sunday, January 16, 3pm onward, on the land

Rain date: Sunday, January 23, 3pm onward

RSVP to Hope: hopematrix@fastmail.com

Join Randy Dodd at his biochar kiln and learn how biochar is both a valuable soil amendment and a simple yet powerful tool for carbon sequestration. We’ll get started at 3pm, but feel free to drop in and stay as long or short as you like. We may greet the winter sunset together. [Click here](#) for a good biochar primer.



Spicy, wild mustard “creasy” greens are growing in the far field. Yum!

♦ There's much more to be done – preparing bylaws, completing design development, work closely with HUD to achieve funding, pull permits, figure out the entrance road, etc. [Read the rest of the story here.](#)

MARKETING & PROMOTION CIRCLE



CGEV's newest Functional Circle came into being in September, 2021, after incubating as a part of Membership & Marketing for over a year. Leaders Ren and Quai have been focusing on getting up to speed as a new

Circle ([read more here](#)):

- ♦ Organizing and prioritizing the work of marketing
- ♦ Developing a **marketing plan**
- ♦ Updating the **website**
- ♦ Improving CGEV's **messaging**
- ♦ Collaborating with the Membership Circle on **Open House events on the land**
- ♦ Creating sub-circles to get all the work done!
- ♦ There is much to do and we need hands and minds to join us in this critical work in order to help the village meet its timeline. Will you join us? Contact Ren: renenberg.cge@gmail.com. [Read more here](#)

GOVERNANCE & TRAINING CIRCLE

Competitive Culture

Results-oriented: what is accomplished matters most

Values efficient decision making

Seeks to win and to be right

Judges others' actions as right or wrong, good or bad

Blames others and punishes mistakes

Values independence

Protects what is mine; assumes scarcity

Skills used to dominate

Listening for "how am I different?" and "where do I disagree?"

Oriented toward critical evaluation; "what's wrong here?"

Cooperative Culture

Relationship-oriented: what is accomplished AND HOW both matter

Values inclusive decision-making

Seeks to understand

Seeks to understand the intention behind others' actions

Questions others and encourages learning from mistakes

Values interdependence

Shares what is mine; assumes abundance

Skills offered to suggest/guide/teach

Listening for "how are we the same?" and "where do we agree?"

Oriented toward curiosity; "What's possible here?"

The need for effective governance becomes ever more crucial and multi-faceted as we grow. In 2021, G&T grew both in size and capacity. [Read all about it here.](#) In 2021, this Circle:

- ♦ Offered two **Cooperative Skills and Governance trainings** for 32 members and 15 guests.

LAST SATURDAY

Saturday, January 29, 3-5pm

Save the date – topic TBA!

TAKE A HIKE!

Membership Circle.

Sunday, January 30, time and place TBA

RSVP to Margaret is essential: bktittle@gmail.com

Enjoy the outdoors and get to know other CGer's and friends. Check the [google calendar](#) for place and time or email Margaret.

MID-WINTER/IMBOLC CEREMONY—the Awakening of New Life

Governance & Training Circle

Sunday, January 30, 3-5pm on the land

[RSVP](#) for information and to register

This seasonal celebration comes to us from the Celtic world. Historically, this day was called Imbolc (lamb's milk) because the lambing season began. It is the promise of renewal, of hidden potential, of earth awakening and life-force stirring. We welcome the growth of the returning light and witness Life's insatiable appetite for rebirth.



The wetland beavers' common house! (photo by Anthony)

MEMBER HAPPENINGS

Is there something you are offering, or something you've heard about, that you want the community to know about? If so, contact Hope by the 25th of each month:

hopematrix@fastmail.com

From Doug Jones and the farm team

As the New Year rolls in, there is a nutritious abundance growing on the farm at Common Ground. In fact, we are growing more crops than ever before to help nourish and comfort you in your favorite hearty winter recipes this

- ♦ Pilot tested an **Empowered Learning Circle online 4-session training** for likely offering to CGEV members.
- ♦ Established an **Information Technology SubCircle**
- ♦ Coordinated **ten “Last Saturday” education sessions** for members and friends
- ♦ Offered **ten Simpler Living: Earth Skills Sundays** engagements with the land
- ♦ Consulted with other Circles as needed to address **governance and facilitation issues.**
- ♦ We look forward to an invigorating 2022, helping the community to build more knowledge and skill. [Read more here.](#)

IN THE KNOW



Margaret Anderson brings information about the nearby Bluestem Conservation Cemetery project, a sustainable burial alternative designed within a nature preserve, where green burial supports the restoration of conservation land to create a living, memorial landscape—a

healing place for people and for native habitat. [Click here](#) to read more.

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

We **strongly recommend** these 2-day virtual trainings as a way to begin a shared conversation about racism and social justice at Common Ground Ecovillage. [Click here](#) for information and to register.

Foundation for Intentional Community Resources

FIC offers many short events and continuing courses that are highly relevant to our work at CGEV. Visit this website (<https://www.ic.org/learn/>) to see the array of intriguing options for the months to come.



Randy, Kathleen, & Michelle are building a woodshed (photo by Jess)

season! **We invite you to join our unique, four-season CSA to share in the bounty!** This is a great way to show your support for the Agrarian Vision of CGEV as well as taste the food from the land you will someday be living on! If you feel like your busy schedule or distance from the land has limited your involvement in CGEV, this is a really delicious way to connect to the land and support the farm that will be growing food for the future Ecovillage while getting to enjoy fresh tasty veggies! **You don't have to wait for the village to be built to get a taste of what it will be like to share in the weekly harvest and learn to eat local food with the seasons!**

Email happyhealthysolutions@yahoo.com for more details and to join.

Jessica Cudney & Michelle Rozek:

Lunar Wisdom Circle, January 2 & 17, via Zoom Gather in community every New and Full Moon to develop a committed eco-spiritual practice that strengthens your relationship to nature's cycles.

[RSVP to Way of Belonging](#)

From Melanie Yukov:

Feeling gassy, bloated, or in pain? Not sure what could be causing your tummy upsets? I am offering 30-minute complimentary coaching calls for anyone looking for guidance which combines and integrates a wide spectrum of knowledge and techniques. Check out my website: www.root2risewellness.org.



This fresh and delicious salad mix could be yours through Doug's CSA!



Michelle scans the wetland for wildlife (photo by Jess)

