



Finding Common Ground

December, 2023

Up Front

We're getting close to choosing a new development path, including a brand new surprising option. Hear all about it at the Community in the Round meeting **THIS SATURDAY, December 2, from 3-5pm**, via Zoom or in-person at the Nest. RSVP to [Anthony](#).

Come to a **Winter Solstice gathering on the Land** to burrow together into the heart of the darkest day; itself the gateway to light returning. We'll stoke a fire near the Grandmother Oak on Friday, December 22, 3-5pm.

The **conservation easement process** is progressing with a draft proposal on the table to place 63 acres of woods and waterways into two complementary easements. [Click here](#) to learn the details.

Common Ground will be the site of the organizational meeting of the **Triangle Prescribed Burn Association** on December 9, 9-noon at the barn. Hosted by Mart Baumgartner, Orange County Extension Agent, we'll learn about—and experience—prescribed burn basics.

CIRCLE NEWS

Planning & Development: P&D remains resolved to commit to a specific development plan by early 2024. It's time to bring at least some aspects of the long-held dream to fruition, even if the development path we choose may not be the whole dream or meet every standard we have held for it... and in any case we need to address the currently unsustainable financial picture very soon. To that end, **we have been developing an accessible overview/matrix of the likely development paths before us** and are sharing it, and eventually our

MEETINGS & EVENTS



This Red Maple lives up to its namesake (Photo: Jess)

Banner above: Leafy and delicious spinach grows abundantly on the farm

GET INVOLVED

- ♦ All events are in Eastern Time and open to everyone unless otherwise indicated. **You must RSVP** for details & last-minute changes.
- ♦ COVID Policy: For your safety and others', bring a mask in case it is needed. At CGEV, we protect those most vulnerable.
- ♦ Accessibility: At this stage in our development, terrain is unpaved & uneven, & restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.
- ♦ Google Calendar Link: <https://tinyurl.com/CGEV-Calendar>
To add/change an event, email Ren at ren.enberg2@gmail.com



An abundant gathering of gratitude at the Nest (Photo: Ren)

specific development recommendation, increasingly widely via email notices, website, meetings such as the upcoming Community in the Round, and a new Member Forum discussion board. ♦ Of special note is that a **new Orange County Development category, called a Flexible Development/Conservation-Cluster Option, has recently opened up**, which looks like it could allow us to build a smaller, simpler, less expensive version of the original master plan. After long years of struggling with restrictive and zoning options, and even feeling hemmed in by our own Master Plan—over eight years old now—this just possibly could be a dramatic unburdening and breath of fresh air we've been waiting for. We're looking very closely at it now, as well as honing three other quite different alternatives to offer the community some very fundamental choices. ♦ **Please stay aware that as things seriously heat up, everyone's efforts are going to be called upon and needed.** There are already calls out for new and/or energetic members to take on specific tasks that P&D (and other Circles) cannot—and there will be more! Don't stand apart, not now, especially.

Membership: A significant way that members support our community is by paying dues. Pure and simple. Each member, starting at the Exploratory level, does their part to cover the ongoing expenses of the mortgage, utilities, loan repayment, taxes etc. The Membership Circle has the job of defining the financial rights and responsibilities of members. The community sets a recommended amount and the member adjusts that amount according to what is affordable on a sliding scale. ♦ **The fact is that the total dues collected monthly does not come close to covering our monthly expenses.** Currently there is a shortfall of more than \$1000 each month. **If every member were paying dues at the requested level, this gap would be reduced by nearly 70%!** We have been fortunate to have had LLC investments to cover the shortfall and

COMMUNITY EVENTS SNAPSHOT

Scroll down to the "All About Events" section below for details.

- ♦ **Community in the Round**, December 2, 3-5pm
- ♦ **PermaYoga & Tea by Lucas**, Mondays, 4:15-5:15pm
- ♦ **Racial Awareness Reading and Reflection Group**, Mondays, 7-8pm
- ♦ **Prescribed Burn Organizational Meeting**, December 9, 9am-noon
- ♦ **Heart Share (Zoom)**, December 15, 7-9pm
- ♦ **Earth Connection Sunday**, December 17, 10-noon
- ♦ **Winter Solstice Celebration**, December 22, 3-5pm
- ♦ **Tours of the land by request:** Contact [Lisa](#)

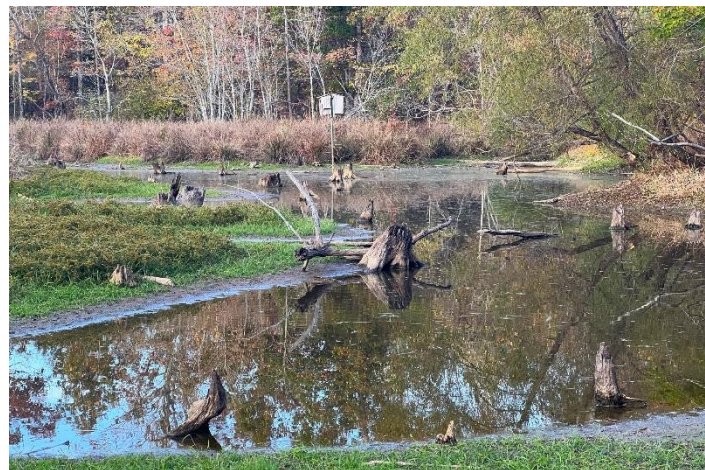
CIRCLE MEETINGS DIGEST

All Circles are welcoming new members. Visitors are encouraged to attend with RSVP in advance. Contact the leaders listed—they'll be glad to talk with you!

MEMBERSHIP CIRCLE

- Fridays, December 1&15, 1-3pm, Zoom
RSVP to Lisa with subject "Membership Circle":
LBerley@yahoo.com

We are very interested in having new members and welcome Visiting Members to observe and join us in our work. There will be time on alternating Fridays for taking care of tasks from 1-3pm. We would be delighted to have you join in on these as well.



The wetland swelled after a heavy rain (Photo: Michelle)

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

- Wednesdays, December 6 & 20, 2-4pm, Zoom and in-person at the Nest in Mebane
RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

There may be more meetings called as development decisions emerge. Email Anthony for updates and links. We encourage observers.

other pre-development costs but this cannot be counted on any longer. ♦ **The Membership Circle is asking each member to help remedy this situation by increasing your dues payments.** Ask yourself these questions: Has my financial situation changed since I set my dues level and can I now increase my dues? Am I ready to advance from Visiting to Exploratory and begin paying dues and participate in community decision-making? Does my income vary from month to month and do I find I can occasionally pay an extra amount? Let's see what we can do together. Thank you for doing your part to keep Common Ground solvent. **Please Contact Katy ASAP to make a change to your dues payments:** katy@hartsmill.org



The sociocracy training led by Ahmed Avais was very well received. Thank you, Ahmed!

Governance & Training: The Communications Subcircle is settling into our new role under G&T. First, we rewrote our Domain & Aims, clarifying that we will continue to work on communications policies but these will now filter up through G&T where they will receive more input from various voices on the circle. Here's what we've been up to lately:

♦ **Our IT Task Group** is developing a more unified approach to CGEV's technological needs. **We're Announcing new "Forward-Only" emails** that will simplify and clarify our communications. Instead of trying to remember who is on a Circle or group, you can now send emails to one Circle address and it will be forwarded to all the appropriate people. **Contact leaders listed in the calendar for their Circle's address.** ♦ **The CGEV Discourse Forum:** The forum is **LIVE** and is accessible at discourse.commonground.eco. Or, find it at the Members tab on the website. At this point, we are waiting for the Membership Circle to work with us to provide the list of members to be invited. We hope this will be resolved soon so that we can all get in there and

Financial & Legal Subcircle

*We are seeking one or two new members. Our key role is to ensure that CGEV financial and legal undertakings protect the viability and prosperity of CGEV and the Hart's Mill, LLC. If you feel that you (yes, YOU!) may have appropriate skills and interests and wish to deepen your contributions toward moving CGEV forward at this critical time, **contact Paul**, subject F&L: voss@hawkweed.net*

LAND STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

- Tuesday, December 12, 7-8:30 pm, Zoom and in-person at the barn

RSVP to Doug with subject "LSC RSVP":
dr.tobagopepper@gmail.com

This Circle's projects range from field to forest. Your involvement is needed and makes a difference.

GENERAL CIRCLE

- Sunday, December 10, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom and in-person at the Nest in Mebane

RSVP to Hope with subject "GC", 2 days in advance: hopenatrix@fastmail.com

Come and observe to find out what's happening with all Circles at CGEV—and how you can be involved.

GOVERNANCE & TRAINING CIRCLE

- *We're taking a break from meetings in December. If you'd like to learn about the work of this Circle, contact Hope with subject "G&T": hopenatrix@fastmail.com*

CommC Subcircle

- *CommC is looking for new members interested in helping to shape communications policy, systems, IT and the Website. If this sounds like YOU, contact Quai*



Raccoons leave their tracks in the soft wetland ground (Photo: Jess)

discuss our development options and other topics important to our members. There are also sections dedicated to Functional Circle work and an area for general community topics, along with a section containing helpful instructions.



Farmers protect the tender plants from freezing temperatures.

Land Stewardship: After a community-wide review, the **NEW Forest Stewardship Plan** has been consented to by the General Circle! This plan will guide our forestry decision for years to come and help us complete the conservation easement process. Hope and Randy continue to work with the Eno River Association on our conservation easement grant application. ♦ In the garden/on the farm, preparations are being made to care for the plants on these cold nights (16 degrees on Nov. 29!), including coverings over the beds to trap warmth inside. Most of the fall crops harvesting is complete. **We estimate over a ton-and-a half of sweet potatoes came out of the ground!** Amidst a good corn harvest, some peanuts, quite a few butternut squash, some sorghum, and plenty of sunchoke, we have quite a few nutritious calories that will be feeding us for months to come. **Please come on out to enjoy the garden space and/or to volunteer!**



Slanting sunlight illuminates the woodland and Grandmother Oak
(Photos: L-R, Michelle, Gonzalo)

ALL ABOUT EVENTS

TOURS OF THE LAND—by request

Membership Circle

*Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining? You can schedule a tour of the Land! **Contact Lisa** with subject "Request a tour."*

COMMUNITY IN THE ROUND

Governance & Training Circle

Saturday, December 2, 3-5pm, Zoom & in-person

RSVP to Anthony, subject "CIR": weston@elon.edu

In view of the holidays, there will be one meeting for both November and December. These all-member meetings are reliably informative and connecting for all involved. We'll speak to what's most relevant when the time comes.

PERMAYOGA & TEA WITH LUCAS

Under the Grandmother Oak

Land Stewardship Circle

Every Monday in December, 4:15-5:15pm

Contact Lucas for information:

Experience a holistic awareness cultivation practice with the breath, movement, and more. Or some mindful moments meditating and enjoying hot tea in good company. All ages welcome. Tailored to those who show up. Bring your own mat, blanket, pillows, warm clothing, etc...whatever you need to be comfy and focused! Suggested donation \$5, all proceeds go to CGEV.

RACIAL AWARENESS READING & REFLECTION GROUP

Membership Circle

Every Monday, 7-8pm, Zoom.

Contact Lisa to join with subject, "Racial Awareness Book Group": lberley@yahoo.com

In keeping with our vision of living in justice and harmony with each other and the land, we formed this group to increase our awareness of racism in many aspects of our society. This is a safe place to learn together. The weekly format helps build trust and a habit of paying regular attention to this work.

MEMBER HAPPENINGS

Is there something that you want to share with the community? If so, contact Hope by the 25th of each month: hopematrix@fastmail.com

Community Herbalist, Melanie Yukov, is bringing a **Fun with Fermentation** class to Arcadia Cohousing on Tuesday, December 5th, from 7-9:30 PM. Did you know that eating fermented foods boosts immunity, improves gut biome diversity, and decreases inflammation? For details and registration visit www.root2risewellness.org/classes. Scroll down past the "Digest Best" series. The fermentation class is at the bottom of the page. Thanks to Becky for sponsoring this at Arcadia!



The best playground ever! (photo, Hope)

OUTSIDE EVENTS/WEBINARS/READINGS TO EXPAND OUR SOCIAL & CULTURAL HORIZONS

Foundation for Intentional Community [Creating Community in the Modern World](#)

Wednesday, December 6, 11-12:30 CST

What is lacking in the modern society model? When we think about human connection, ecological balance, existential purpose, spiritual meaning: what could be different? Join Damanhur resident, Celastrina, for Creating Community in the Modern World, a webinar on how to build modern eco villages in today's society.

[7 Directions of Service \(7DS\)](#) is an Indigenous-led environmental justice and community organizing collective based on Occaneechi-Saponi homelands in rural North Carolina dedicated to canceling the Mountain Valley Pipeline/Southgate Extension, advocating for legal Rights of Nature and developing a land, language and cultural center based on traditional teachings. We carry a responsibility to be a strong voice

People attend as much as they can. Encouraged for members of CGEV as well as welcoming to the larger community. The format is reading aloud and breaking between paragraphs to share personal reflections, questions, ideas. Our current book is *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Please join us!

PRESCRIBED BURN ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday, December 9, 9am-noon, at the barn

For info. and to RSVP, contact Hope, subject PBA:
hopematrix@fastmail.com

Prescribed burning is key to preventing wildfires, restoring forest health, and more. Mart Baumgartner, Orange County Extension Agent, is organizing a Prescribed Burn Association (PBA)—where neighbors help neighbors—in the Triangle Area. He's kicking it off at Common Ground! We are going to conduct some basic training on fire breaks; discuss Prescribed Protective Equipment (PPE); Walk two possible fire burn units, and conclude with conducting a learn-and-burn exercise using the tools to start and extinguish a fire! Wear appropriate clothing and bring your own water/snacks.

HEART SHARE

HeartWeavers Subcircle

Friday, December 15, 7-9pm, Zoom

RSVP to Ren: Heart_Share@commonground.eco
Facilitator for December: Ren

Come and get to know other members on a much deeper level as we practice both compassion and vulnerability. We 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.
Organized by Ren Enberg & Quai Derr

EARTH CONNECTION ON ZOOM— "Kinship is a Verb"

HeartWeavers SubCircle

Sunday, December 17, 10am-noon, Zoom

RSVP to Momo: mfreehill@hotmail.com

for the lands, waters, and more-than-human world.
[Click here](#) to see the many events planned in December.

Organizing Against Racism

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.



Hope and Paul bring visitors from Vienna, Austria, to enjoy the farm.

A wonderful opportunity for members and friends near and far to deepen connection to their immediate indoor and outdoor natural environments. Momo Freehill will facilitate this program with a focus on Kinning as a way to form earth connections. You are invited to read the following article/dialogue prior to attending. It has been very resonant and inspiring for Momo:
<https://orionmagazine.org/article/kinship-is-a-verb/>

WINTER SOLSTICE CELEBRATION & GATHERING BY THE FIRE

HeartWeavers Subcircle

Friday, December 22, 3-5pm, Grandmother Oak

Contact Jane with subject "Solstice":

meadows.maryjane@gmail.com

The Winter Solstice is the shortest day and also the moment when daytime starts to lengthen in the north. Deep within the darkness, the light of a brand new year is growing. And the same thing is happening in us. Details to follow.