



Finding Common Ground

January, 2024

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

Common Ground Ecovillage is an agrarian intentional community. We are drawn and held together by common interests and values, dedicated to living in justice and harmony with each other and the 112 acres of our precious meadows, waterways, and woodlands. This vision has proven to be life-giving and transformative as well as complex and challenging to achieve. And we're still here, working as hard as ever to collaborate to manifest a more responsible, sustainable, and cooperative way of living.

There are some changes in this Almanac format. It starts with a calendar of meetings and events. Then, **there's an array of rich summaries of 2023 achievements and struggles as well as personal reflections** about what it's been like for some members to take this ride. Fair warning: it takes a LOT of pages to do justice to how we've danced with the joys and challenges of the past year. We hope it will be worth your while to go the distance.

And uncharacteristically, we're **asking for donations** to keep the flame burning, lights on, and the land intact so that we can continue to manifest this collaborative agrarian vision, so needed in the world today. [Click here](#) for PayPal or use Venmo: @hope-horton-5. Thank you!

COMMUNITY EVENTS SNAPSHOT

- ♦ **Racial Awareness Reading and Reflection Group**, Every Monday, 7-8pm
- ♦ **Prescribed Burn Prep Day**, January 7 & 21, 1-4pm
- ♦ **Prescribed Burn Training**, January 13, all day
- ♦ **Heart Share**, January 19, 7-9pm
- ♦ **Fresh Take Info Session**, January 20, 4-5:30pm
- ♦ **Community in the Round**, January 27, 3-5pm

MEETINGS & EVENTS



The Winter Solstice ceremony concluded with everyone lighting a candle and naming intentions for themselves, Common Ground, and the world for the year to come. Thanks to Jane and Theresa for their leadership to create this beautiful event. (photo: Becky)

Banner above: Golden-hour sunlight kisses the tress (Photo: Hope)

GET INVOLVED

- ♦ **All events are in Eastern Time** and open to everyone unless otherwise indicated. **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 Calendar@commonground.eco

- ♦ **Potluck Supper**, January 27, 5:30pm
- ♦ **Tours of the land by request:** Contact [Lisa](#)

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”:** iberley@yahoo.com*

RACIAL AWARENESS READING & REFLECTION GROUP

Membership Circle

Every Monday, 7-8pm, Zoom.

Contact Lisa to join: iberley@yahoo.com

We are currently reading Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates. 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 and understanding of racism in its many forms. This is a safe place to learn together. The weekly format helps build trust and a habit of paying regular attention to this work. People attend as much as they can. The book group is for members as well as the larger community. The format is reading aloud and breaking between paragraphs to share reflections, questions, and ideas. Please join us!

PRESCRIBED BURN PREP DAYS

Land Stewardship Circle

Sundays, January 7 & 21, 1-4pm, on the land

RSVP to Hope with subject “Rx Burn Prep”:

hopenmatrix@fastmail.com

CGEV is at the center of an initiative to establish a Prescribed Burn Association in the Triangle area (TPBA). Mart Bumgarner, Orange County Extension Agent, has taken the lead, and Hope is the current Chair. Our land will be the site of the TPBA’s first prescribed burns in both our meadows and woodlands! The forest burn requires substantial preparation to ensure that the fire will remain contained. It will take a solid team to establish burn lines and remove hazards. We’ll need many volunteers to help with this exciting and important work!



Crops nestling in their winter blankets (Photo: Doug)

CIRCLE MEETING 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, January 5 & 19 1-3pm, Zoom
RSVP to Lisa with subject “Membership Circle”:
iberley@yahoo.com

We have set aside time on the alternating Fridays for taking care of tasks from 1-3pm. We are very interested in having new circle members and welcome Visiting Members to observe and also join in the work of the circle.

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CIRCLE

- Tuesdays, January 2, 16, 30, 6:30-8:30pm,
Zoom and in-person at the Nest in Mebane
RSVP to Anthony: weston@elon.edu

Email Anthony for updates and links. We encourage observers.

Potential Residents Advisory Task Group

- Sundays, January 14 & 21, 6-7:30pm
Contact Momo for details with subject “PRAG”:
momo@commonground.eco
If you are a member who is seriously interested in living at Common Ground, this task group needs your voice, your energy, and your skills!

LAND STEWARDSHIP CIRCLE

- Tuesday, January 9, 7-8:30 pm, Zoom and in-person at the barn
RSVP to Doug with subject “LSC RSVP”:
dr.tobagopepper@gmail.com



Rachel tries her hand at using the drip torch (Photo: Hope)

PREScribed BURN TRAINING

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday, January 13, all day

RSVP to Hope with subject "Rx Burn training":

hopenatrix@fastmail.com

The TPBA is fortunate to have Extension Forester, Nathan Gatlin, teach us the principles of prescribed fire as well as supervise an ACTUAL BURN on one of CGEV's meadows. Let's all learn how to work safely with this vital method for land health and restoration.

HEART SHARE

HeartWeavers Circle

Friday, January 19, 7-9pm, Zoom

RSVP to Ren: heart_share@commonground.eco

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

FRESH TAKE INFO SESSION

Membership Circle

Saturday, January 20, 4-5:30pm, Zoom

RSVP to Lisa with subject "Fresh Take":

iberley@yahoo.com

This general overview of Common Ground Ecovillage is recommended for all new members and those who are considering joining. It includes the membership process, governance system,

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

GOVERNANCE & TRAINING CIRCLE

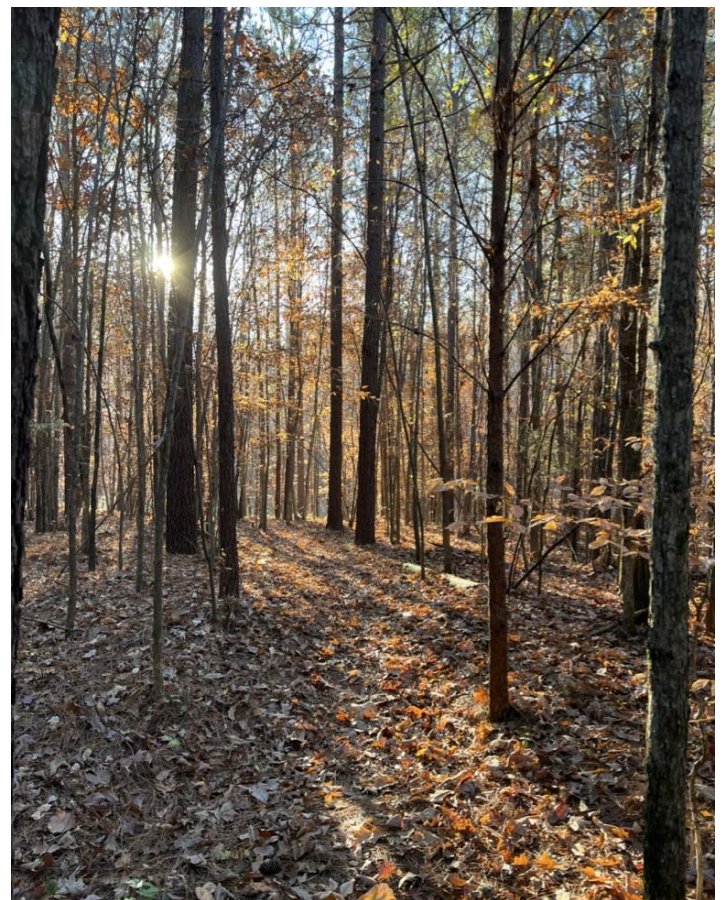
- Thursday, January 11, 7-9pm, Zoom

RSVP to Hope with subject "G&T":

hopenatrix@fastmail.com

Communications Subcircle

We're anticipating a re-energization of our activities as we transition to 2024. As CGEV selects and invests its time, talent, energy, and money into its primary development plan, CommC and the IT task group want to be prepared to provide useful infrastructure for discussion and communications generally as well as member data and reporting. Additionally, our Subcircle will be generating and refining communications policy ideas to send up to G&T as proposals, which may lead to community-wide communications policies. Interested? Contact Quai: communications@commonground.eco



Glowing light and shadows in the woods (Photo: Michelle)

GENERAL CIRCLE

- Sunday, January 21, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom

RSVP to Hope with subject "GC", two days in

advance: hopenatrix@fastmail.com

stewardship of the land, and the plans we are considering for building the village. Come and learn a lot, fast!



The sun sets on the shortest day of the year (Photo: Becky)

COMMUNITY IN THE ROUND

Governance & Training Circle

Saturday, January 27, 3-5pm, Zoom and in-person

RSVP to Becky: blaskody@gmail.com

This is an opportunity for the full community to come together and focus on emergent issues that affect us all. These all-member meetings are reliably informative and connecting for all involved. We'll speak to what's most relevant when the time comes.

POTLUCK SUPPER—following the Community in the Round Meeting

Membership Circle

Saturday, January 27th, 5:30 - 7:30pm

Check your email for location, or email Lisa with subject "Potluck": iberley@yahoo.com

Potlucks are our time to break bread together and socialize, play, or sometimes chew over the Community in the Round meeting content. Please bring something to share. Vegetable dishes typically predominate but all sorts of food are welcome. Just bring a list of ingredients or jot them down when you come.



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

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

Two Public Hearings on **Buc-ee's Rezoning Request** Mebane City Council, January 8, 6pm

[Click here](#) for information and talking points

These hearings are part of the City Council's decision-making process whether to allow Buc-ee's to build its water-guzzling 75,000 sq ft mega gas mart on Trollingwood-Hawfields Rd. The Mebane Planning Board recently [voted against](#) the project 6-3, and nearly 1,000 community members have [signed a petition from 7 Directions of Service](#) opposing it. BUT, the fight is not over!!! Mebane City Council members must be convinced to deny Buc-ee's special use permit and rezoning requests.

Foundation for Intentional Community

[The Impact of Ecovillages Worldwide](#)

Thursday, January 25, 10-11:30am

Ecovillages are regarded as real-life laboratories of sustainable change. They are communities in which people develop sustainable, social, ecological, economic and cultural practices. These emerging innovations can provide important insight for the broader society and drive sustainability transitions. Join sociology researcher Lasse Kos to explore the impact of ecovillages in North America and worldwide, via a presentation on the results of the largest global survey on ecovillages.



Winterberry Holly pops in the wetland (Photo: Hope)

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

A Year in the Life of COMMON GROUND ECOVILLAGE

*Photos by Jessica Cudney, Hope Horton, Doug Jones, Becky Laskody, Michelle Rozek, & Quaye Trimble
The quotes are from the CGEV Principles and Intentions*

...We are committed to living closely and attentively with each other and the land...

Reflection from Anthony, Planning & Development Circle— Tonight I am sitting in the little studio I built some years ago on the land – Heart’s Ease – late at night in a steady rain. Outside it is all dark except for one window of light over in the barn kitchen where Doug is growing seedlings. A quiet moment. It is the end of December and Circle leaders have been asked to reflect on the last year...and ahead.

2023 was a year of immense changes. A year ago we were still having trouble letting go of the prospect of building the whole village as originally planned. Huge amounts of time and energy, as well as money, were invested in that plan, yet it was increasingly beset by all sorts of trouble too: skyrocketing costs, too few members with the resources or backing for what we might be able to offer, and the trailing off and endless complication of what had started as such a hopeful dance with a coop-friendly loan originator with the promise of HUD backing.

Early in the year we were looking at a fallback: building just the infrastructure (road, wells, septic, utilities) for the full village, leaving the rest to individual members or small co-owning groups. But that finally proved financially out of reach too. In this we were



hamstrung by the County Planning office’s insistence either on fidelity to our approved and very ambitious Master Plan or starting over to go all the way back through the approval process with a new plan. Neither worked for us!



...We are abidingly loyal to the land...

Reflection from Doug, Lucas, and Caleb, Land Stewardship Circle—2023 has been a VERY BUSY AND FULL year for all the members who are connected to our Land, and for the Land Stewardship Circle and “Full Table CSA farm crew”, who coordinate all the many activities. Here are some Highlights:

Our Forests – This year we turned a huge spotlight on our stewardship of our forest land, taking seriously our long-held intention to place major portions of the land into watershed and farmland conservation trusts. **The Eno River Association is guiding us through the process of applying for a grant from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund and Orange County to do just that.** The first step was to create a new [Forest Stewardship Plan](#). In November, we achieved consent from the General Circle to proceed with an application that proposes to place 63 acres into two different types of easements. There is work yet to do, but we are very close to the finish line.

Apiary – Honeybee hives once again grace our land. A new beekeeping team, Jane, Hope & Lara, inherited loads of equipment from Randy, who maintained some hives some years ago. They established three hives and are doing their best to help the bees to come through the winter intact. Here’s to sharing honey next spring!

This left us with a range of imperfect options: going all-out for the original plan or at least its infrastructure, or putting aside the residential development for the moment and ramping up farm production and other financially-productive uses of the land so that we can make the community financially sustainable. Maybe building one large farmhouse, and trying to move more members at least close to the land to support more community activities. By November we were preparing to lay out this range of alternative development options for GC and the community, hoping for a decision by the end of the year. Once again none of the options were ideal, but by then we were glad at least to be clear and moving toward a decision.

Then, finally, for once, things broke our way. At least, probably. It turns out that the County has just put into place a new option called *Flexible Development: Conservation Cluster*. This can give us previously unimaginable flexibility as to layout and size, support (require) putting major parts of the land into conserved Common Areas, and allow individual septic systems close to the houses, saving the expense of a community system in Far Field and saving Far Field for long-term farm development. It requires an undemanding approval process; and – crucially – very likely implies significantly lower infrastructure costs – possibly not even needing to pave the road.

In the view of P&D the Flexible Development option is made for us! Much of the farm- and community-building that was also in the option mix is still a live option as well, just integrated with the residential development.

To be clear, we'd still be building only the infrastructure (road and well, mainly), leaving major initiative and costs down the road for resident household and groups. In many ways that could be an advantage, giving us much greater freedom and schedule flexibility. Concerns do remain, especially about how to ensure that future residents share community values and commitments. We're working on this! Another set of questions have to do with co-owning groups: what legal



....Education is a key part of our mission....

Our Land-Related Events –

The calendar was buzzing with no less than 14 events sponsored by our Farm Crew, Nick, and other members of CGEV. Many of them included a big lunch connected to the theme, provided by our Crew. Numerous people from the surrounding community came to these events.

- ♦ **Potato Palooza #1** in March—Planted 800 lbs. of potatoes and got other projects done, too.
- ♦ **CFSA Piedmont Farm Tour** in April—Selected to participate in the 2-day Carolina Farm Stewardship Farm Tour. We gave tours to 209 attendees.
- ♦ **Potato Palooza #2** in June—Dug up about 700 lbs. of our 1600 lb. crop, and talked about the history of potatoes as a human food.



- ♦ **Tomato Canning Day** in July—A hands-on workshop, canning tomatoes, pasta sauce, and salsa.
- ♦ **Plant Identification Walk** in July—Melanie helped a group to identify and learn about the medicinal, edible, and spiritual healing properties that the plants offer.
- ♦ **Acorn Processing Workshop** in August—Learning how to make flour from acorns.
- ♦ **Corn Harvest and Husking Day** in September—Picked mature flour corn, husked and shelled several bushels, and learned about growing, storage, uses.

forms and financial support may exist for co-owning and co-building, and who among our members is hot for it (a key path to affordability). A PRAG subgroup is working on this one. Cost estimates and more County consultations are forthcoming.

So at the moment, at least, things seem to be converging. You never know, of course: all sorts of complexities and obstacles may still come up. Also, of course, if we consent to move forward on the Flexible Development model, there will be still be an immense amount of work ahead of us. But it will be actually designing and building things and moving ourselves, our community, our hopes and dreams onto the land. Next year, if I am sitting here at the same time, things may just have turned the corner. I am looking forward to it.



Two other quick notes. One is that the discussion of the Flexible Development plan as well as the other options is now available to all members on the Forum. **Go [here](#) to peruse details and join the discussion.** Yes, YOU, yes, NOW.

The other is a plea to get involved. This is a crucial time, and it is still not clear that we have the critical mass of active members to pull the project off at the needed scale. I have been so gratified to see how our cadre of actively involved and super-capable people is slowly expanding, and new people increasingly moving into central roles as some of us Old-timers really do need to lay back a little. This is great! But it has to keep going. If you are not already actively involved, please make it a resolution for 2024. **It takes a village to... build a village!**



- ♦ **Black Walnut Workshop** in September—Gathering, dehulling, shelling, eating!
- ♦ **Land Education Weekend – Multiple tours, projects, and mini-workshops** in October—Forest and Farm tours, Permaculture 101 workshop, Peanut harvest, Hugelkultur mound-building, other projects.
- ♦ **Sweet Potato Harvest** in October—Dug hundreds of pounds out of our total crop yield of over 3000 lbs. Some call it a vegetable; we call it an important starchy staple crop.
- ♦ **Biodynamics Intro Workshop** in November—Learning about this special farming system.
- ♦ **New Shiitake Log Inoculation** in December—Inoculated 130 oak logs with Shiitake spawn.
- ♦ **Triangle Prescribed Burn Association Kickoff** in December—We have become a host for this new group learning how to use fire to improve fields and forests.



....We envision a world where people have returned to personal involvement in food production....

Our Farm Business Endeavors—The Farm Crew who operate the Full Table CSA on Common Ground Land, utilizing substantial Common Ground infrastructure, made lots of improvements in the size and efficiency of our operation. This allowed us to inch closer to paying ourselves a living wage. We are confident that we will keep this trend going in 2024!

....We seek a vigorous and diverse membership....

Reflection from Lisa Berley, Membership Circle—This past year, our community has focused on finding a new path for creating the village. While this was going on, the Membership Circle (MC) shifted gears on its two domain areas: the membership discernment process and the support for member and nature connections.

♦ When members identified their intentions for living in the village through a community-wide survey, there were those at all levels of the membership who said they were not going to be living on the land but wanted to continue as active members of CGEV. Based on that feedback, MC created a new membership level called “Affiliate.”

♦ While the opportunities and constraints for building the village were being explored, MC put a temporary hold on the monthly Open Houses and also on Fresh Take, the introductory overview of CGEV. Instead, tours of the land were added to the monthly potluck. (Fresh Take has resumed and is offered every other month.)



The fun and fellowship of past harvest festivals was replaced with loads of land-based activities organized by the Farm Crew, the Land Stewardship Circle, and others. At a point when big development decisions were being discussed at the Community in the Round (CIR), the Potluck time shifted to follow this meeting, the thought being that local members and visitors could continue the discussion over dinner if they wished. core social connecting time – not to mention the scrumptious food that shows up every time.

Potlucks remain a core social connecting time, not to mention the scrumptious food that shows up every time.

♦ This past year, the MC shrunk by half! (A couple of members left the community and one shifted her energy to a different Circle.) We have gotten a lot better at keeping an eye on what we can accomplish and by when, and we



Membership in the CSA went up about 25%, sales were up about 18%, crop diversity increased to the point where we offered an average of 18 different items each week throughout the year, which we believe puts us at the top of the list of CSA farms in the region, in the category of diversity of veggies offered. (Over the year, we offered 65 different veggies!) Two significant new items were Shiitake mushrooms from our own oak logs, and the first figs from our own fig trees. Yum!

We also raised about \$3,500 in contributions from CSA members for our “Solidarity Fund”, which we are using to make veggies available to low-income people who may be finding it hard to afford high-quality vegetables. We are grateful for the many volunteers who worked with us throughout the year, both at some of our harvest events, and merely showing up frequently to say “How can I help you today?”

Staple crop experiments and new perennials – For the first time in years, some of the far field was prepared for cultivation (about ½ acre). The area was prepped with the tractor, amended slightly, and then planted out with mostly covered crops, but also a bit of sorghum which was harvested, processed, and boiled to make molasses. This was one of our staple crop experiments. Some of the other experiments included:

♦ Three sisters planting of corn, beans, and winter squash. We learned that we need to adjust the timing of the bean planting or pick a new variety to grow in order for that sister to grow better

♦ Peanuts

♦ Varieties of flour corn and popcorn

♦ Fava beans for tempeh

From these pursuits with staple crops, we learned more about what foods will work here in order to cover more and more of our nutritional needs from the land at Common Ground. Part of bringing our agrarian vision to life. Next year we’ll build on these learnings and expand

have added some extra meetings for getting work done as needed. We identified tasks for non-members and after a little searching were rewarded with great support. Many thanks to all of our members for bringing their hearts and gifts to Common Ground.

....Decision-making will be inclusive of all voices....

Reflection from Hope, Governance & Training Circle—G&T offered opportunities for learning sociocracy in different ways: Zoom-based classes, individual coaching, and a full-day training by a skilled teacher, Ahmed Avais. We continue to shepherd both the General Circle and Community in the Round all-member monthly meetings. Our administrative responsibilities are now under the purview of our Communications Subcircle, which transitioned from its status as a Functional Circle (CommC) last fall. Sociocracy continues to serve us well, helping us hear all voices in order to make decisions for the benefit of all.



Reflection from Quai, CommC—2023 has been a year of challenge and change: Working with our IT and Website task groups, we stood up a members-only Discourse forum linked from our website, commonground.eco.

- ♦ We worked with Membership to design member database tables and reports that circle needs in order to do its work.
- ♦ Our IT task group (combining IT and Website task groups) are currently designing a relational database to move our data to so that reports can be made even more useful and efficient.
- ♦ We experienced an upsurge followed soon by a downsurge in members willing to take on the important work that takes place in task groups.
- ♦ We utilized the flexibility inherent to Sociocracy and moved CommC back under the G&T umbrella in order to

the experiments, implementing what we think will be successful on a slightly bigger scale.

On top of all of that, we planted more perennials in the garden area: blackberries, hazelnuts, and asparagus. We are excited that these plants will be part of our foodscape for many years to come.



Infrastructure and Soil Fertility Improvements—We are thrilled to report that we received a **\$10,000 Orange County Economic Development Grant** to build out our pack & wash area on the east side of the barn. This project will help the CSA business substantially and will open up space underneath the barn for more recreation-focused activity!

By installing a powerful new pump in our well, we now have more than enough water available for all of our irrigation, washing, and Barn needs. We composted and applied many, many tons of leaves (courtesy of Mebane Public Works Dept.) to all of our 92 crop-growing beds, enlivening the soil with lots of organic matter. We finished building one new “caterpillar tunnel” and built another new one from scratch, which will be a big boost to our cool-season growing capabilities, an early-spring head-start on tropicals, and a good dry home for some disease-sensitive tropical crops in the hot season.

....We hope to make ourselves an instrument for cultural change....

Some of the ways being a part of Common Ground Ecovillage lifts and carries me, from Kathleen

- ♦ The loving hearts and souls that reach, each day, for connecting within and amongst our commonalities and differences. Yes, we feel divisions and painful losses witnessing fear, hatred and greed move in our human world. AND there is the choosing to pay attention to what we freely receive: fresh air to breathe, drinkable waters,

better meet our needs as well as G&T's needs. We're anticipating a re-energization of our activities as we transition to 2024. As CGEV selects and invests its time, talent, energy, and money into its primary development plan, CommC and the IT task group want to be prepared to provide useful infrastructure for discussion and communications generally as well as member data and reporting. Additionally, our subcircle will be generating and refining communications policy ideas to send up to G&T as proposals, which may lead to community-wide communications policies.



....We will share our joys and struggles....

Sweet moments from Ren—Jamming music by the fire, celebrating relationships that were repaired with open hearts, all the warm hugs, the dancing and the singing, learning about new fun things to do in and out of CGEV,



receiving and contributing meals when times got hard, getting vulnerable in heart share gatherings both on the land and online, pulling peanuts from dried branches and then celebrating the job done by breaking bread with the other workers, howling at the full moon beside Grandmother Oak Tree, sharing resources like trucks, equipment, and knowledge, developing better communication skills and habits (out of necessity!) and "just" building some new friendships that I hope will last with or without the project are the first things that have come to mind. These are the things (plus many more) that I want in my future that motivate me to keep hoping we'll live together one day.



light freely gifted to us by the sun, the tree's gift of shade and company, being lifted by sounds of birds communicating frogs chirping leaves rustling a sigh, faces that light up when seeing me, persimmons

and turtles, beavers and percolation of gratitude that comes when experiencing the uncountable gifts flowing.

♦ Purpose and coming together to compound the progress of a worthwhile endeavor. "We envision a world in which people live in justice and harmony with each other and the land...actualizing...an agrarian intentional community that is regenerative, creative, collaborative, and celebratory in all that we do." We work at it together.

♦ Learning new skills like how to make biochar, enrich clay soil for the thriving of our creatures and people, and the sheer joy, how to move a small building, how to insulate my home with what is given here on this land, how to listen and connect more deeply, what it takes to dry and harvest seeds in order to ensure foods for years to come, how to take responsibility for my own body's wastes so that they contribute to the health of our surroundings instead of causing harm, thinking skills (!) yes (!) how to discern and ask where does this come from? How will it affect elements around this small body and mind? Perspective.

♦ Opportunities to broaden my mind and scope of understanding. Learning and practicing sociocracy, making decisions by consent and laughing together at unsureness of skill. Receiving and giving encouragement – yes, we can, yes I am.

♦ Inspiration from the peeps here – Lusas's enthusiasm and confidence; Hopes huge heart and sharing of the joy she finds foraging in our forest; Paul's well of seeking, sorting, and discerning ability; Anthony's artistic skills & designs; Amy's inclusive looking after and bringing people along; Gonzalo's example of being/speaking with the plants, trees, and those with quiet voices; Lisa's laughter and friendliness; Becky's way of observing & sharing what she knows; Randy's quiet stability and soft heart; Theresa's light; Kara's smile and healing gaze; Momo's ability to pierce through confusion and aim with clarity; Doug's devotion and magic with all things green; Katy's willingness and immense generosity; Daniel's what, when, and however he can help; Michelle's and Jess's unseen presence providing vibrations of reverence as I walk the trails; Ren's precision and warmth; Quai's equanimity and solutions; Wesley's energy; hundreds of visitors helping and leaving their gifts on their way to finding home. Jane's attunement and listening; so many more...so much good



Thoughts from Margret—2023 was a year of big transitions. Jeffry and I retired from years of market farming in December of 2022. This meant turning over that middle plot of farm land at CGEV, so lovingly tended, to the other farmers, who made immediate and good use of it. It also meant freeing up my body to switch from full-time farm work to once again being a cyclist. The day after my 71st birthday, after months of training, I commenced a 3-day, 200+mile bike ride, from Henderson to Emerald Isle. Note my grin of triumph! Sadly, Jeffry suffered an injury in the



summer, which involved another kind of personal growth for me; adaptation, patience, anger management, emotional and physical support, were all called for-- a different kind of triumphing over a very different kind of challenge. Retirement

also meant re-evaluating our life-path. We realized we really love where and how we live, and concluded that living at GCEV anytime soon would be too big a shift. Consequently, I have transitioned from Active Engaged to the new membership category of Affiliate. What a great term! It allows for participating when and how I like, maintaining my good friends, still providing some financial support, and being proud to say I am affiliated with such an inspiring community.

food! And the rare feeling of being okay, enjoyed, and valued as you are.

♦ Riding the rough times together – our challenges are big. Social change is an ambition that asks, can we? How will we? What may, what may not? What do we do then? Are we willing to wait? Are we willing to keep at it when things don't go as planned? This negatively biased brain that has fits of doubt looks around and finds itself surrounded by faces expressing patient recurring commitment, love for the journey and each other. And I can't wait to do it again!

Reflections from Lisa—As our community was forced to consider new options for development, I experienced a



sense of fresh air. Members stepped up their involvement through the Potential Residents Advisory Task Group (PRAG). Even though being a part of the CGEV community continues to grab me, I feel overwhelmed by the thought of building my own home and all that that entails. As I

challenged myself to speak up at General Circle meetings with questions and reactions, I felt listened to and taken seriously. For me this was another year of drawing closer to long term members. The many opportunities to hang out on the land and at the Nest really helped me with that. Kudos to the Farm Crew for organizing many of them. The growth in my relationship with Amy H., who I work with so closely in MC, was a highlight of 2023. She sees and appreciates me for who I am, both my “super powers” and the things that are challenges for me. The loss of some active members shook me in my boots. Some of them I worked with as members of the MC or I met in my role as a Buddy. Some left because of the lack of affordability. I'm having a good time in California over the holidays with my granddaughter. She is pure joy and exhausting. My son, Ben, and I are having a rich and at times challenging time - learning to get along in tight quarters and as 2 adults!

