



Finding Common Ground

May 2025

Up Front

In April, Common Ground flowed with the energizing elements of Spring in many beautiful ways. Our participation in the Piedmont Farm Tour weekend highlighted our burgeoning garden and catalyzed members and guests to come together to help out, engage with attendees, and market their varied wares. Displays of medicinal herbs, honey, homemade muffins, and wrought iron designer items were wonders to behold. At the Saturday evening potluck celebration, Lucas unveiled our new, smokeless fire pit which saved us all from



Lucas is really excited about this new fire pit! (Photos-Hope)
Banner above: A newly built beaver dam in the wetland



Ro invited women to sit by the pond on Friday evening to celebrate Beltane with fresh-flower crowns. (Photo-Kai)

dodging fumes while also sending less carbon into the atmosphere! These events closely coincided with beginning of the Beltane, the time when many of our ancestors celebrated the fertility of the earth as the season shifts from spring toward summer. Kai invited her beloved mentor and wisdom-keeper, Ro Marlen, to come from the Asheville area to help us better understand the depth and richness of this communal celebration of the earth and our ancestors. We enjoyed her storytelling around the fire—and the ensuing drumming and dancing under the stars!

Circle News



Governance & Communication

Introducing Compassion Corner—Making Life More Wonderful. This column offers bite-sized pieces to remind us of the NVC principles and practices that about 25 members learned over the 8-week course with Steve Torma. The first topic echoes recent teachings from Dusty Staub, who facilitated our Grounders meetings in Wintertime, and Steve Torma. Both of them recommended that we develop the habitual practice of appreciation. But how do we do that in a way that can be most meaningful to the recipient? How about trying this:

Replacing Compliments with Appreciations

In NVC, appreciation is understood to be a powerful substitute for compliments that feels wonderful for both the giver and receiver.

Invitation: *Instead of a compliment like "You're so caring!", try offering a specific appreciation that includes an observation, the feelings it brings up, and a need that it meets, e.g., "When I think about how you offer rides or make food for a member in need, I feel a flush of warmth and gratitude, because it meets my needs for inspiration and a loving community."*

Meetings & Events

- ♦ **All gatherings are in Eastern Time** and open to everyone unless otherwise stated.
- ♦ **You must RSVP** for details and 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, terrain is unpaved and uneven, and restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.
- ♦ **Google Calendar Link:** CGEV Calendar
To subscribe, add or change an event, email Ren at calendar@commonground.eco

Circle Meetings

Membership

Thursday, May 1 & 15, 12-2pm, via Zoom. Task meetings as needed, May 8 & 22, same time.

[RSVP to Lisa](#) with subject "Membership Circle"

Planning & Development

Tuesdays, May 6 & 20, 4:00-6:00, hybrid. [RSVP to Anthony](#) with subject "P&D"

Financial and Legal Subcircle

[Contact Becky](#) to offer your participation

Land Stewardship

Thursday, May 8, 7-8:30 pm, on the land (and hybrid if needed). [RSVP to Doug](#) to confirm details. A fire to gather around may follow the meeting.

Planning & Development

We now have our permits and site plan in place! This puts us in a position to put the plans out for bidding to potential infrastructure contractors. This is a long lead-time process. If we are to begin building the infrastructure in the Fall (best time), we need to be starting the bidding process quite soon. At the moment it continues to hinge on our confidence in our financial capacity. P&D is working hard to finally decide the most workable ownership structure for moving ahead and to establish enough security about financing to set the wheels in motion. We must consider an upfront infrastructure loan and eventual individual construction-to-permanent mortgages, as well as potential external affordable-housing support. Financial & Legal Circle champions, Becky and Theresa, are hard at that work. Others are helping, too – and perhaps you?



◆ Meanwhile, Quaye and Anthony have been able to fairly reliably mark and color-code the twelve village lots. You can find the coded plan above and in OnlyOffice (OO) [here](#). The aim is mostly to support a **new Lot Preference Survey process** for folks intending to be in the first

Governance & Communication

Tuesday, May 20, 7-9 p.m., Zoom
[RSVP to Quai](#) with subject "G&CC"

General Circle

Sunday, June 1, time and location TBD.
[RSVP to Hope](#) with subject "GC" 2 days in advance



Members Bradley and Casey display fine wrought iron wares and medicinal herbs for sale at the Farm Tour

All About Events

Tours of the Land

Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining? Contact Lisa and put "Request for Tour" in the subject line: Lberley@yahoo.com. Or text 919-619-2979.

Racial Awareness Book Group

Membership Circle
Every Monday, 7-8 pm, via Zoom
Contact Lisa to join with subject “Racial
Awareness Book Group”

We are currently reading *The Rage of Innocence – How America Criminalizes Black Youth*, by Kristin Henning. The book group is for CGEV

wave. [Click here](#) for an extensive explanation and helpful information on OO, including a guide to walking the lot layouts using this coded plan. For discussion, see the Forum [here](#). **Surveys are specifically requested of all Engaged Members** or pod members looking to buy a lot within the year. Visiting Members are also welcome to submit a survey. **Due date is May 26th.**



Member Abigail of Venus Botanica talks to Farm Tour visitors about her medicinal herb preparations

◆ When P&D and General Circle (GC) committed to go ahead with village infrastructure permitting and development, we also committed to many other moves. One is to establish a **Vision Circle** advising GC and holding the overall Principles & Intentions and Cultural Agreements close as changes come to community and land. Happily, GC has just approved a proposal from the Membership Circle to do just that.

◆ Another commitment is to **fast-track Common House development** which we have been trying to do, but progress is slow. A meeting in early May with a potential designer and natural-building teacher – in fact Mr. Mud-Dauber

members and the larger community. The format is reading aloud and breaking between paragraphs to share personal reflections, questions, and ideas. People attend as often as they can.

Community Farm-to-Table Lunch

Land Stewardship Circle

Every Tuesday at 1:00 pm at the Barn

Contact Lucas if you plan to come:

lucas.babinec@posteo.net, 301-767-6720

The light and warmth have returned and we're ready to celebrate. Come enjoy a simple, nourishing meal prepared straight from the garden plus thoughtful conversation with good humans who care about the earth. **In order to put these meals on every week, we need support.** This can be a chance for you to learn the skill of cooking for community with what's seasonally available. Lucas can help you plan the menu and get everything ready to put on a yummy farm-to-table meal for other community members and visitors. Please sign up to support the cooking or the post-meal dishwashing [here](#). And remember to offer donations—cash, Venmo, or pantry staples are much appreciated (olive oil, rice, beans, lentils, GF flour...)



There are many signs of new beaver activity in the wetland including new dams and this spiffed-up lodge.

himself – hopefully will speed things up. We remain committed to moving on the Common House, but of course a few hundred other things are also demanding time, energy, and money. More help is always welcome!

♦ Finally, we committed to taking care and giving heart to preparing ourselves and the other creatures and the land, as best we can, for the changes to come. Randy has set up a framework for this work— see the Forum [here](#). Again, wide participation is hugely needed and welcome!



Rachoog sells member-made muffins at the Farm Tour. Her smile says it all! (Photo-Hope)

Land Stewardship

April wrapped up with an extraordinary early Beltane gathering around a fire beside our spirit guardian tree, Grandmother Oak. People wrote prayers and blessings on beautiful ribbon, wrapping the pieces around branches of the tree. There was song and dance and drumming and story and merriment. The ancestors were smiling as the fungi below ground felt the

Monthly Heart Share

Membership Circle, organized by Ren & Quai
Friday, May 16, 7-9 pm, via Zoom

[RSVP to Heart Share@commonground.eco](mailto:RSVPtoHeartShare@commonground.eco).

This month's theme: Am I (fill in the blank) Enough? These monthly gatherings offer a meaningful way for CGEV members to connect on a deeper level than our usual gatherings allow. New members often explore this way, so older members are encouraged to welcome them. Watch for a detailed email or just RSVP now! Facilitators needed; we'll support you and you can choose the theme!

NVC Follow-Up Training with Steve Torma

Saturday, May 17, 10-noon

Contact Momo for information:

mfreehill@hotmail.com

[RSVP to Ren for Zoom link](#)

Steve will facilitate ways to apply NVC process to our current diverse, complex, and changing **needs** including the land, the whole community, individual members, and interest groups. We will explore our **capacity** as a community, prioritizing needs and working with strategies based on resources, revenue and our [guiding principles](#) (P&I's).



Lucas leads one of many farm tours (Photo-Kai)

reverberations. Equally important to the work projects on the land are the moments when we can gather and celebrate. Part of being good stewards on this land is opening ourselves to deeper listening, greater groundedness, and curiosity about what the other-than-human world wants to co-create with us here. Come on out, walk the land, and feel yourself coming home. This fire was our first community gathering around the new smokeless firepit.

Request: It would be great to receive a few more hundred dollars to recoup the cost. If you haven't donated yet, here's a link to the fundraiser: <https://gofund.me/5ad23448>



Members gather around the fire as Ro talks about the origins and nature of Beltane. (Photo-Marilu)

From the Farm

Our Piedmont Farm Tour participation was a rocking success! Almost 200 folks flowed through to see what we have going on out here. The buzzing energy was palpable. So many community members chipped in to make this past weekend absolutely extraordinary. All around gratitude for muffin baking, plant start bumping up, veggie sales, weeding and mowing,

Newcomer Coffee MeetUp

Membership Circle

Sunday, May 18, time/location TBA

This is a great opportunity for those who are curious about CGEV and want to make connections with existing members.

For more information or to sign up, contact

Lisa: Lberley@fyahoo.com or 919 619 2979

Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communications Circle

Saturday, May 31, 3-5pm, location TBD

[RSVP to Becky](#), subject "COG" for details

These all-member meetings are reliably informative and connecting for all involved. Topics vary according to what's most relevant. Check your email for an invitation closer to the date.

Community Potluck

Membership Circle

Saturday, May 31, 5:30-7:30, following COG on the land (if weather allows)

No RSVP required

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. Make it a habit to come to these events!



Last week's Farm Lunch cooks, Lucas & Janey (Photo-Kai)

canopy tent set-up and take-down, flier printing, parking sign making, and much, much more. Plus, we had such a wonderful time greeting visitors and hanging out together. **This is what community supported agriculture and Common Ground's agrarian vision looks like!**



Mayapples are a-bloom on the land! (Photo-Hope)

Membership

In April, the Membership Circle finalized two proposals for the community and the General Circle consented to both. The first is titled **"Creating an Advisory Vision-Inviting (Keeping) Sub-Circle for CGEV"**. The purpose of this new General Circle Subcircle is to remind us of our vision as we work cooperatively to make decisions. Read in OnlyOffice [here](#). The second proposal is titled **"Membership Level Requirements for Living at CGEV"**. It outlines steps including choosing a lot, potentially sharing the lot, signing a contract and paying for the lot and finally, building a home. Read in OnlyOffice [here](#).

It is times like the April 26-27 Piedmont Farm tour at Common Ground when the feeling of being in community is the strongest - something

Unearthing: A Spiritual Harvest

Governance & Communications Circle

Sunday, June 1, 10am–12:30pm at the Nest in Mebane

RSVP to Faun: faun@myecostory.com

We receive Mother Nature's gifts every day, from food and medicine to beauty and song. But when we are busy or feeling overwhelmed by the news of the day, it's easy to miss the ways she can impart wisdom, offer messages from the deep subconscious and reconnect us to the sacred. Faun Finley, a Visiting Member, is offering the workshop, *Unearthing: A Spiritual Harvest*. *Unearthing* is an embodied conversation and a wild co-creation with our Mother. It's an invitation to drop into our hearts and make natural altars with her bounty of fallen treasures. *Unearthing* is designed to expand our sense of wonder, open us to new understandings and help us along our healing journeys. This workshop is offered free of charge, with a request to complete a feedback form afterward. For more details, contact Faun.

Member Offerings

From Hope: SONAM Spring Concert

Date: Friday, May 9th, 2025

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Baldwin Auditorium, Duke University

Donations: To benefit our continuing work with local non-profits

Many CGEV members have enjoyed these concerts. I hope you'll come to our spring concert, featuring *Bridge of Song* by Veljo Tormis. We will sing some of our very favorite music from Finland, South Africa, Estonia, Latvia, and more.

to behold! Many members pitched in during the event and stayed for hours in support of the Farm Team's efforts. The cooperation appeared seamless. The joy that came from hanging out together in a relaxed way and for a common purpose was beautiful. Once the event was over, there was celebrating with food, singing and dancing in the traditions of Beltane.



There's always plenty of delicious and nourishing food at a CGEV potluck! (Photo-Hope)

Hope and Randy would like to pass along two resources about forest regeneration that have come to our attention and we are finding to be very helpful for our collective caring for the Common Ground forest:

- Recent talk by Ethan Tapper and Mike Chaveas: ["How to Love a Forest"](#) (Thanks to Becky for forwarding this link, c/o the Aldo Leopold Foundation)
- Just released NOVA show on PBS: ["Secrets of the Forest"](#)



Volunteers from the Triangle Prescribed Burn Association came out to clear a fire break around one of our woodland areas. We're hoping to host a 15-acre burn in early June. (Photo-Hope)