



Finding Common Ground

January 2026

Up Front

2025 was a remarkable year for Common Ground. From fields to forest, our agrarian ecovillage vision is emerging more than ever before. The farm team has established Common Ground Growers, LLC, and shifted to a more secure and sustainable CSA model that now feeds 80 families. We are on the cusp of closing on a conservation easement with the Eno River Association which will protect more than half of our land in perpetuity. Infrastructure construction for our long-envisioned village is well underway and Randy has put together this pictorial take on the construction process. Members are coming together in mutual care and support as we prepare to live together on the land.



The sinuous new entrance road is emerging next to our current road, which will be phased out. (Photo: Hope)



Top: This Pink corn was grown from legacy seed given to Janey's daughter by a Mexican family who has cultivated this variety for over 200 years. (Photo: Kai)

Above: Caleb shares the wonder of bright orange carrots with little beings on a gray day (Photo: Kai)

Common Ground continues to be a welcoming place; a hub of nourishment, connection, and learning for the dozens of visitors and volunteers who wish to experience and contribute to this ecovillage-in-process. The (many) pages and final photospread in this Almanac give glimpses of what – and who – it's taken in this past year to be at this point of possibility. There's so much more to be imagined, codified, felt, worked through, and built, and you'll see that, too. Show up in January to help build a solar kiln, volunteer at the farm, observe a meeting, sing Songs for the Long Dark together, learn about NVC, support the Many Turtles Learning Collective. Turn the page and see what's for you.

Circle News

Land Stewardship

Growing our business: As the culmination of a months-long process led by Kai, our Farm Team (Doug, Caleb, Lucas, Kai, and Marlene) officially restructured the Farm entity in January from a sole proprietorship to Common Ground Growers, LLC. A new clarity of vision helped this team to transition to a warm- and cold-season CSA, resulting in a significant expansion in members (80 households) and size of plantings (350 veggie units delivered/week). Their commitment to economic justice led them to determine salaries for the year in a decidedly different way from the typical capitalist business model, determining incomes to reflect not just hours and skills, but also the individual financial needs of the Farm Team members. Extending this ethic to their low-income customers, they raised \$1715 to create a Solidarity Fund. We are grateful to the many dedicated volunteers and visitors who helped to make all of this possible.

Growing capacity: A grant from the NRCS (written by Caleb and Paul), provided funds to build a new high tunnel and greenhouse. Kudos to Goni for leading the construction team. A section of the 9-acre Far Field went through major soil improvement so crops of potatoes and winter squash would produce well there. Thanks to the City of Mebane for dropping off 100+ truckloads of leaves for compost! New ground was also brought into production at the south side of the main Garden area. A small team of dedicated blueberry enthusiasts created a large blueberry bed at the garden's lowest point, using a "swale and berm" land-shaping method to regulate the water flow. We planted more Paw-Paw trees, and Gonzalo accomplished a major expansion of the perennial plantings in the Northeast corner of the field.



Common Ground Growers team (L-R, Marlene, Doug, Lucas, Caleb, Kai)

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:** To subscribe to the CGEV Calendar, add or change an event, email Ren at calendar@commonground.eco
- ♦ **Members Only Discourse Forum Link:** <https://discourse.commonground.eco/>



Circle Meetings

Planning & Development

Every Wednesday, 1:30-3:00pm, hybrid
[RSVP to Anthony](#) with subject "P&D"

Membership

Thursdays, 5:15-7:15pm, Zoom and at the home of Amy H. Task meetings, as needed, are on alternate weeks, same time.

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

Land Stewardship

Tuesday, January 13, 7-8:30pm, on the land at the barn (hybrid if needed)

[RSVP to Doug](#) with subject "LSC" for details

General Circle

Sunday, January 11, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom

[RSVP to Hope](#) with subject "GC" 2 days in advance

Governance & Communication

Tuesday, January 20, 7-9pm, Zoom

[RSVP to Quai](#) with subject "G&CC"

Growing diversity: At any given time during the warm season (cold season features more mulch on garden beds put to sleep), there are more than 100 different kinds of plants growing in the 2-acre area of our main garden. With the insects and birds that accompany this kind of plant diversity, our garden is between 10-100x more diverse than an average acre of monoculture (most of the agriculture in the United States). If you include soil microbes into the mix too, our garden may be more than 1,000,000x more diverse than an acre of conventional industrial agriculture ecosystem!

Growing Community: Networking and education were major themes this year. From April through November, the Farm team and friends offered weekly lunches and monthly dinners for as many as 30 guests. Events like our Tomato Canning Day and "Potato Palooza" planting and harvesting days attracted many participants. In April we hosted over 200 visitors to our Farm during the annual 2-day Piedmont Farm Tour. Together with some guest vendors, we provided various foods and beverages as well as 6 hours of continuous garden tours each day. Other educational efforts included field trip classes from Emerson Waldorf School, Elon University, and Alamance Community College. We also sponsor Wheel of the Year celebrations, reviving this ancient practice of honoring the seasons.

Growing the Many Turtles Learning Collective 501(c)3 non-profit: Education is foundational to the Common Ground mission. Together with the Membership Circle, we have formed a 501(c)3 in part to enhance and expand the offerings already happening on the farm. We appreciate your support! [Click here to chip in.](#)



several workers secure a plastic cover onto the high tunnel (Photo: Kai)



Janey, Gonzalo, and Lara build the blueberry patch (Photo: Kai)

Reflections from Janey:

Community to me is feeling the fulness of all the possibilities and co-creating the next steps of aliveness. Community is messy, challenging, complicated and rich with opportunities for problem solving, learning, growth and healing. I am celebrating each of you and all the many ways we brought forth appreciation and celebration in 2025 ~ groundbreaking in so many ways as this dream of Common Ground blossoms. A few of my favorites, among so much more ~ Shiitake Mushrooms, Blueberries, Pink Mexican Corn, Ginger & Tumeric, Soul Nourishing Farm Lunches & Dinners, Fire Circles and Honoring the Wheel of the Year, Building Relationships with the Grounders & Dusty & Compassionate Communication, Creating a Plan to Honor and Care for the Trees, Feeling the Caring for the Land held by the Conservation Easement. It has been a year of blessings & beginnings & endings & letting go & I am most grateful to be part of this ever-emerging village.

All About Events

Tours of the Land

Membership Circle

Are you a new Common Ground member or a curious person who is thinking of joining? Email [Lisa](#) or text at 919-619-2979 and put "Request for Tour" in the subject line. We usually have a tour each month at 1:30pm on the same day as the Community on the Ground (COG) meeting and Potluck.

Reflections from Farmer Caleb

Phew, what a year! It's my 6th cold season here on the farm. I almost didn't make it through the first couple. But as I reflect back on how far we've come, I am filled with gratitude. Gratitude for our first successful warm season, humbled by the commitment you have shown in staying with us through thick and thin, and joy at what we the community are building on the ground here. 2025 has been filled with gifts and I sense we are gearing up for many more seasons of deep nourishment to come. Blessings on the winter stillness and excitement for the year to come!



Kathleen, Gonzalo, and Randy collect cut trees for a variety of uses (Photo: Hope)

Planning & Development

For more than a decade the transformation of part of our Common Ground into the setting for a village was mostly a dream—detailed, passionate, complex, and shifting. Fall 2025 was the moment when the plan and the will and the money and the machinery finally came together to make it happen. Infrastructure construction started in early October and the land already looks very different. A sinuous road enters wide-open fields and overlooks retention ponds that will become rain gardens. Trimmed-back woodland edges bring light back to some very special trees. The pond is now mostly drained and the dam cleared, both awaiting restoration. There have been costs too—monetary, for sure, and a feeling of intrusion and imposition and even violence on the land. Large piles of cut trees and branches abound, yet these are now being turned into lumber for us to build homes with and mulched to nourish the land. And what is emerging is a new pattern in which a compact development can be more and more clearly seen nestled within a still largely unchanged landscape. Every drop of water that falls on or moves through the land will take a circuitous, leisurely and permaculturally-informed route

Racial Awareness Book Group

Membership Circle

Every Monday, 7-8 p.m., Zoom

Contact Lisa to Join with subject “Racial Awareness Book Group”: Lberley@yahoo.com

*The book group is for CGEV members and the larger community. We read our books aloud and break between paragraphs to share personal reflections, questions, and ideas. People attend as often as they can. Our current book is **Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools**, by **Monique W. Morris***

Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communication Circle

Saturday, January 10, 2-5pm, hybrid at the Nest

RSVP to [Theresa](#), subject “COG.”

Community In the Round is a monthly forum for ALL MEMBERS to help you:

- *Get more connected with each other*
- *Hear updates and information from Circles*
- *Explore hot topics, inspire ideas, and hear feedback from members*
- *Discover how to become more involved in winning ways*

*We'll have in-person conversations and a zoom link for folks to call into for **audio only**. Watch your email for details about this month's event!*



Sharing a potluck spread on a lovely April day (Photo: Hope)

Community Potluck

Membership Circle

Saturday, January 10, 5:30-7:30pm, after

Community on the Ground, location TBD

RSVP is helpful for set-up and location.

Contact Lisa: Lberley@yahoo.com, 919 619 2979



A heron fishes in the nearly drained pond (Photo: Anthony)

rather the typical quick runoff pass-through. (Yes, we're an ecovillage!) **For a helpful visual overview of progress, take a look at Randy's slideshow [here](#) and Robby's drone video [here](#).**

The blood, sweat, and tears (in part, literally) of many members have brought us to this point. Randy and Anthony have led the charge on the site design and construction management side; Becky, Theresa and Paul on finances and legalities; guided by sympatico and generous consultants and collaborators Bobby Tucker and Robyn Heeks. Together they and others have forged a site plan and funding scheme that is bringing a million-dollar transformation to the land while satisfying stringent County regulations. Our members have come together in "pods" to pool resources to live on the land within their means. The financial team is establishing an ownership model to hold the land in common while securing infrastructure loans and deposits to fund the development. The MEC Environmental Construction crew, led by Trilton Jones, is doing an impressive job.

Tree removal is done and the downed trees are heading in many different directions. Some already being milled at Fireside Sawmill into lumber. A team led by Paul and Goni is building a solar drying kiln to cure the planks so they'll be ready to use for building. Some straight and strong trunks will go to surround and support the central circular meeting and activity space we are planning for the Common House. Still more trees will be milled on site and stored under cover for construction use. Others are reserved for firewood, biochar making, shiitake mushroom growing, or ground up for mulch.

Roads will soon be sculpted and topped off with gravel. Daisy Evans Gunn Trail will reopen in a new configuration

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



Randy & Anthony with logs set aside for building (Photo: Becky)

Monthly HeartShare

Membership Circle

Friday, January 16, 7-9pm, Zoom

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

Theme: TBD. Watch for an email with more details and a Zoom link. Facilitators needed—we'll support you and you can choose the theme!

Songs for The Long Dark

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday January 17th in the Far Field

5-6pm—Potluck in the Barn Kitchen

6:15pm-8:30ish—Song Circle & Fire

No RSVP is needed, All are Welcome!

This is a guided song journey for these times. Francis Weller speaks of this moment in the human collective as The Long Dark. He says we are entering into the soul's territory: a time of descent, dissolution, gestation, incubation, imagination, and dreaming. As we descend into The Long Dark, we can turn towards song as a way to dream together.



Paul, Justin, Kathleen, Lucas, Kara, Goni, and Quaye lay the foundation for the solar kiln (Photo: Hope)

and with a new surface. Meantime, of the tons of soil that has been moved, topsoil will be redistributed. Subsoils from the various excavations (as well as hopefully from the pond) will be used for roads and berms. Next, we'll move to well-drilling, installation of water lines and septic systems, preparation of parking pads, finishing the road surfaces and generally getting ready to finish infrastructure construction.

Once we plat the land and lease lots, we can turn our attention to the next phase of building. As soon as January arrives, we will start diving into residential architecture, Common House fundraising and design, and a dozen or two other things! To get ready for the residential phase of things and the sale of lot leases, we've been working with multiple lawyers on the covenants and conditions for the prospective HOA (or whatever exact ownership structure we end up putting in place). We will shortly close on the \$700,000 short-term construction loan from Housing Assistance Council to cover infrastructure completion, which we expect to quickly repay from sales of lot leases which will close in mid-Spring. An additional \$150,000 may be raised from a combination of long-term internal or external loans, and potentially other measures.

We're planning for a Grounders retreat at the end of January to work out more detailed terms of our community life together and plan in earnest for the next phase of things. Kathleen is keeping everyone informed, and others too – so many people are so very active! If you're not yet one of them, consider this yet another invitation to join in. This is the time when things are taking shape, when input can really make a difference, and your effort and involvement and ideas can help to move things along. Join up!

Let's Build a Solar Kiln!

Planning & Development

Sunday, January 18th, 9:30 am, meet at the Barn

[RSVP to Paul](#)

This structure will enable us to cure milled wood taken from trees on our land. In December, we got a great start by laying and leveling the concrete block foundation and getting the floor frame and top in place. Next, we'll be "going vertical" with wall construction on the agenda. Lots to be done, so please consider this a hearty invitation to join us.

New Member Coffee Meet Up

Membership Circle

Sunday, January 18th, 11-12:30 p.m., at Caribou

Coffee, 1408 E. Franklin St, Chapel Hill (Look for a sign on the community room door)

Contact Lisa for more info or to sign up:

Lberley@yahoo.com or 919 619 2979

This is a great opportunity, for those who are curious about CGEV, to ask questions and make connections with other members.

Wheel of the Year: Imbolc

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday evening, January 31, details TBA

No RSVP is needed

Mark your calendar to mark this mid-Winter season with fire, stories, songs, fun, and friendship.



Kai tells an ancient story by the Winter Solstice fire (Photo: Hope)



Steve Torma generously visited the land and guided us through NVC practices (Photo: Kai)

Governance & Communications

G&CC engaged with several key topics in 2025 as Common Ground made the transition to building physical infrastructure, settling ownership model questions, and building its financial infrastructure. During this pivotal year, our small circle created policies and worked with other circles to ensure that we provided “oversight, coordination, and training for CGEV’s governance, Non-Violent Communication, collaborative culture, and communications, including administration of the systems that support these functions,” per our domain.

NVC Training: G&CC decided to integrate NVC & Cooperative skills training as they are two strategies aimed at the same goal. Ren and Quai led an initiative to engage Steve Torma from Earthaven Ecovillage to custom design an NVC class for CGEV members. Sessions were recorded on video and are available for us indefinitely.

Sociocracy Training: Becky continues contributing by coordinating and facilitating Sociocracy training as needed. She hopes to organize a class in March. Please contact her if you are interested.

Circle Coordination and Collaborations: G&CC helped P&D clarify the Domain and Aims and reporting structure of the Grounders task group. We worked with the Membership Circle (MC) to make NVC education an expectation for CGEV member advancement and co-created guidelines for including religious holidays in the CGEV Google calendar. We updated our decision log system and advised General Circle members on its use.

Compassion Corner: Making Life More Wonderful Governance & Communications Circle

Focus: Self-Empathy & Contribution

Contributing to others lives is one way we can meet our intrinsic (coming from inside) and precious need for meaning. Meaning is one of the 9 universal human needs. The others are sustenance, safety, love, understanding/empathy, creativity, recreation, sense of belonging, and autonomy. Sometimes we may think we are meeting this need through meeting obligations, or over-extending ourselves. We may have a tendency to dismiss our own needs (such as rest, fun, autonomy/choice) and prioritize meeting our obligations to others first, perhaps to meet unacknowledged unmet needs for safety, worth, and belonging. This is often a draining strategy that can lead to resentment and burnout. By acknowledging our own met and unmet needs first, we honor and connect to our humanity and current capacity, and then we can freely offer compassion and contribution to others.

Invitation: The next time you are feeling a “should” coming on, take a moment to pause and breathe. Once grounded, ask yourself:

1. Which of my needs will I meet by fulfilling this obligation/request?
 2. Which needs would go unmet?
 3. Which of my needs would be met if I didn’t do this task?
 4. Which needs would go unmet?
 5. How can I honor my own underlying unmet needs right now, so that I am liberated to contribute to others with joy, choice, and expanded capacity?
- And finally,
6. Do I have a clear understanding of what the other person’s needs really are or am I making assumptions or guesses?

Often, simply honoring that we have the same needs as everyone else, and how these needs are motivating us, allows us to refocus on what is important to us and to act out of awareness, capacity, and choice.

Many Turtles Learning Collective

2025 brought the Many Turtles Learning Collective into being! A team led by Kai co-created our name which fits us so well and in so many ways; Karin

Communications: We're developing guidelines about what is shared on social media and external websites, such as the Foundation for Intentional Community. We've begun to work on an Event Communications Policy, so that all event announcements and calendar entries address issues like inclusion, information affecting those with disabilities, health and vaccine notice, and notification that CGEV is open to all spiritualities, agnostics, and atheists.

Marketing: Quaye has been working to set up a new website using a content management system, Drupal. This system will host both our web content and new redesigned JOIN form. The new version of the JOIN form is already linked with our current site. In 2026 we will need to collaborate with the other circles to craft content for the new website.

Membership

It feels good to look back on the past year and be reminded of our efforts and experiences as a community! What is so compelling is a sense that members have grown closer to one another. We started out the year at a Community on the Ground (COG) meeting doing "Speed Dating" to help us form pods for living on the land and ended the year at the COG meeting rocking out in celebration that we have raised enough money to cover our ongoing expenses through March. Clearly we have found new ways to be playful and productive together!

We have taken risks together this past year: signing the contract with MEC, paying "real money" for lot deposits, starting a 510(c)3 non-profit and committing to fundraising, acknowledging points of contention. Some of that was scary and on the flip side, fosters closeness.



Time out for rainbows!

Jacquie and Becky led the team through the many submission forms. We received 501(c)3 status in August and Chari Smith led a group through Fundraising 101 training. Lucas is currently working on the website and Givebetter platform, and Lisa B. is gaining access to Paypal and Venmo. Our current projects will be supporting education through workshops and supportive educational spaces. Topics include nature connections, natural building skills, farming and farm-related learning, communitarian skill development to make relationships better and better. **We hope you can spread the word to others to give generously to this important charitable adventure [HERE!](#)** Please ask us about how you can help too! Contact President Amy H, Secretary Lucas, Treasurer Lisa B, or Asst Treasurer, Krystal.



We're grateful to fine artist, Margret Mueller, for creating this charming logo for us.

Member Offerings

From Kai: As we cross this threshold from 2025 to 2026, I'd like to invite you to experience my New Year's reflections [here](#).

*If you are tired, this might be for you.
If you are weary of what's happening in the world,
this might be for you.*

And as we pause between two years today, what I want to say to us is this—Here's to the miracle of wonderful weirdos endeavoring to co-create a place where the earth is honored and justice is lived.

The Membership Circle (Lisa, Amy, Kathleen, & Jacq) has created new policies and revised existing ones this past year with great thought and consideration. To name a few: JOIN form revisions linked to a new database streamlining the form and access to new members; reworking the Engaged member process to make it easier to complete and more meaningful; creation of a Community Health Agreement that brought together diverse voices; and an updated and more comprehensive Exit Policy. And there is more to come!

In the new year we turn our attention to advancement of those members who plan to purchase lot leases to the Engaged level. It's becoming more important to define who IS a member (living/not living on the land) and their rights and responsibilities, including financial and work responsibilities, and supporting members in communicating honestly and early about touchy or difficult issues, to prevent full-blown and entrenched conflict, through guidance, appreciations, a stronger Conflict Container, and Listening Sessions.

Serious stuff balanced by the joys of hanging out together, playing and caring for one another. We would love to have you meet us!

Roshana shares an original song she wrote: Merry Christmas, Cosmos!

I'm super excited to share this song mostly because it just makes me happy and I want to spread that joy. It's been published on all the streaming services, like [Spotify](#), Pandora and Apple Music, and [Bandcamp](#) (where you don't need a subscription or login).

From Becky: [Plowshare Prayer](#) by Spencer LaJoye. This was shared with me and I am passing this song along to us CGEV folks who are creating a relationship-centric community.

Outside Happenings of Interest (Not Sponsored by CGEV)

In December, the Garden Forum Collaborative presented a talk by Zoë Schlanger, the author of ***The Light Eaters: How the Unseen World of Plant Intelligence Offers a New Understanding of Life On Earth.*** This book reveals cutting edge research into the surprising and multi-faceted nature of plants. [Click here to view the recording.](#) Password: **gardenforum**

Scenes from 2025



January scene at the frozen pond



February prescribed burn at the Far Field, led by Lucas



March installation of our road and community signs



February-Anthony brought Elon University students to for a day of learning at the farm, guided by Caleb (Photo: Kai)



Abigail displays her herbal wares at the April Farm Tour



March Potato Palooza planting (Photo: Kai)



Bradley & Casey display blacksmithing & herbal items at the Farm Tour



Kai & Ro tend the Farm table at the April Farm Tour



May inaugural Farm-to-Table dinner on an exquisite night (Photo: Kai)



May-Caleb works with Waldorf School 3rd graders (Photo: Kai)



May-Kara and Lucas have their wedding at Common Ground



June- Drone photo of the farm by Robby



Lucas surveys July's tomato abundance (Photo: Kai)



Baby Jascha joins the CGEV family on July 11 (Photo: Abigail & Caleb)



Marilu helps to prepare a July farm lunch (Photo: Kai)



August-a spirited volleyball game commences at the Nest



September-Excavators from MEC arrive on the land



September high tunnel construction is in full swing



September-Reema & Chris from the Eno River Assn. walk the conservation easement with Randy and Hope



November-Marilu and Laura join Lucas & Kai to pack the CSA bags



October-The MEC construction crew came to a Farm Lunch



November-burning 18 acres of forest by McGowan Creek (Photo: Hope)



Wally plays in the October mud (Photo: Kai)



November-Doug moves tree logs

