



Finding Common Ground

September 2026

Up Front

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the conversation. The kettle is singing even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots have left their arrogant aloofness and seen the good in you at last. All the birds and creatures of the world are unutterably themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

---Excerpt from *Everything is Waiting for You*, by David Whyte

It's been a massive year at Common Ground. Just a year ago, we signed a contract to begin infrastructure construction to build homes on small lots. Since then, we've made enormous strides, finding ways to finance the cost, sell 99-year leases on lots (ask us about the spaces still available!), weather harsh and often heartbreaking changes on the land, and finish all that is needed to be ready to construct dwellings. It's been huge, complex, exhausting, exciting, gratifying—and ultimately has brought us to a position to take the next steps to live together on the land. Amazing!



Recent rains swell the waters in the pond (photo: Kai)



Top: Sage preps pizzas for the Farm Dinner (photo: Kai)

Above: Rainy day play (photo: Hope)

With all the moving of infrastructure mountains mostly behind us, we're now taking a breath and engaging in a process to know and understand ourselves better—our longings, struggles, challenges, and dreams—finding common threads that will both hold us together and open space for those who also wish to belong here. In the meantime, we chop wood, carry water, and cook some mean Farm lunches and dinners! These pages tell our story of becoming an agrarian ecovillage and invite you to join in the fun and the work of helping to make it so.

Circle News Column

Planning & Development

AFFORDABLE - ARE YOU KIDDING?

News and information to help make it so

By Therese Jensen, P&D

This is the first of a recurring feature to share news and information about how we are striving to make rural living at Common Ground Ecovillage more affordable.

What the heck is Conservation-Based Affordable Housing and why should we care?

When a development includes both conservation goals - such as protecting land, water and wildlife resources and providing affordable housing on the same land, this has come to be known as "Conservation-Based Affordable Housing." This is the niche we described for Common Ground Ecovillage in our recent proposal for affordable housing grant monies through Orange County.

[Click here](#) for a compelling read about how this identification could be a game changer for us, including links to further resources. **BONUS:** Want to know how key community collaborators see us? [Click here](#) to read seven letters of support submitted for our affordable housing CIP grant proposal and bask in the light of how our community's work is being widely recognized!

And here's your [first savings tip](#) for home-builders that can lower your electricity and appliance costs.

We are delighted that this month's Almanac spotlights the extensive, demanding, and vital work of the Finance and Legal Sub-circle, primarily Therese Jensen, with support from Randy, Becky, and Anthony, as well as others. This work may be invisible to members visiting the farm or coming to meetings—OK, we're not as photogenic as babies or broccoli—but in fact it involves nothing less than setting out and setting up the entire legal, ownership, and financial structure of the community going forward. This involves getting and keeping County Planning on our side as well as various other regulators, surveyors, banks, potential grant and funding agencies, you name it. As you can see above, Therese is leading the charge towards affordable living at CGEV. We are extraordinary lucky to have someone with her skills and energies leading all these initiatives so intensively. When you see her, give her a hug!

Meetings & Events Column

Events Snapshot

Details are in the section below Circle Meetings

- ◆ **Mondays, 7-8pm**-Racial Awareness Book Grp, Zoom
- ◆ **Tuesdays, 1pm**-Community Farm lunch
- ◆ **September 4 & 18, 6:30pm**-Friday Farm dinner
- ◆ **September 18-20:** Community Gatherings TBD
- ◆ **September 19 eve.:** Wheel of the Year: Fall Equinox
- ◆ **September 26, 2-5pm**-Community on the Ground
- ◆ **September 26, 5:30-7pm**-Community Potluck

◆ **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/>



It's pepper time! (Photo: Kai)

Circle Meetings

Planning & Development

Tuesdays, 2:30-4pm, hybrid

[RSVP to Anthony](#) with subject "P&D"

Membership

Thursdays, 1:30-3:30pm, 1st and 3rd weeks, via Zoom or in person at the home of Amy H. upon request. Task meetings, as needed, on alternate weeks, same time

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

General Circle

Sunday, September 13 & 27, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom

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



A crew from Action Well and Pump Co. came to install pump and pressure tanks. (photo: Hope)

With a lot of dancing between pump installers, electricians, and Duke Power, it seems like the stars may finally be aligned for the completion of the water system! Thanks to Anthony and Randy for extensive coordination efforts. Primary initial uses for the water will be to keep the newly planted trees watered. Meanwhile, with the recent rains, the pond is refilling!

On the construction side, P&D is managing the final elements of our engagement with MEC Environmental Construction, our site contractor, largely the removal of (much of) the erosion control fencing and the final reconfiguration of the stormwater retention ponds, as well as the disposition of the pond muck currently on the north slope above the pond. We've been cleared by the County to remove much of the erosion fencing (some must stay until seeding is established—the prolonged drought came in a very bad time for the grasses and other planting MEC and we had done—and the County can be reassured that residential construction won't generate any significant erosion). Randy and others have been at work on this already. Please watch for further announcements for work crew opportunities to make at least some further gaps in the erosion fencing for turtles and other animals as well as human walkers, especially along the berm south of the village.

Design-wise, the main work now shifts to architecture and design/build planning. A number of folks have plans in some degree of progress, with different local design/build firms and architects. The August Community on the Ground (COG) meeting was devoted in part to sharing our sense of the process and progress. The Design Review Committee, led by [Paul](#), will likely be sponsoring some further discussions while remaining eager and available to all members for consults and discussions at whatever stage your plans might be.

Land Stewardship

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

[Contact Doug](#) or [Lucas](#) w/ subject "LSC" for details

Governance & Communication

Tuesday, September 15, 7-8:30pm, Zoom

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

All About Events



Eggplant abundance Photo: Kai

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 upon request at 1:30pm on the same day as the Community on the Ground (COG) meeting and Potluck.

Racial Awareness Book Group

Membership Circle

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

[Contact Lisa](#) to Join with subject "Racial Awareness Book Group"

*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. **We just started a new book:** "Three or More is a Riot: Notes on How We Got Here 2012-2025" by Jelani Cobb. This is a perfect time to join.*



Little green bugs like string beans, too! (photo: Kai)

Land Stewardship

August on the land was quintessential Piedmont summer vibes. Hot, humid days, often broken up with a storm or threat of one in the late afternoon. Friday farm dinners were spectacular; one pizza party, one lightning show. Mushrooms popped up like crazy throughout the woods because of the abundance of rain. We're still not out of drought conditions yet, but we certainly got more than our fair share of sky water this month. One great wildlife sighting was a white egret in the resurging pond. Life continues to come back!

The flow of projects continues. Goni and Land Learner, Sage, began cleaning up the area around the lumber boards and solar kiln so that the lumber milled here earlier in the year can be inventoried. Lucas mowed most of the far field with creative spirit and balance for the needs of keeping the field a field and maintaining wildlife habitat. Randy began removing erosion control fencing to help wildlife movement and trail access. A scarecrow showed up to help protect our corn harvests. The tractor got some doggedly persistent maintenance love from Goni. Three members completed an energy cleansing process for the land at the Grandmother Oak and pavilion to kickstart efforts to get the area ready for some community events again this fall.

Looking ahead...a word heard frequently among our Land care members is "capacity", that is, not enough of it to do what needs to be done! As the Farm Team attempts to grow our CSA to get closer to a living wage for members, we've had to expand our Far Field plantings in a huge way. Lots more irrigation, deer fence, and especially, bringing the worn-out soil up to good fertility. We're stretching to get it done. In the Forestry domain, we are still dealing primarily with various uses for the many trees sacrificed during recent Village infrastructure development, as well as cleaning up from all the lumber milling. The actual Living Forest still awaits our attention to its care, as set forth in our Forest Stewardship Plan. We plan to organize a Forestry Subcircle this fall, to return to that area.

As we explore and create the huge list of potential Land-based work ahead of us, we see what that reveals: the limited capacity of our Circle's current members and other volunteers. **We really need more involvement by more CGEV members and friends!** Another big concern is how the labor and financing to construct residences and the Common House may well compete with the needs of the Land. That Land Vision includes

Tuesday Community Farm Lunch

Land Stewardship Circle

Every Tuesday at 1:00 pm, by donation

[RSVP to Lucas](#), or text 301-767-6720

Cooking and sharing meals is an essential part of our Community. Come enjoy a simple, nourishing meal prepared straight from the garden + thoughtful conversation with good humans who care about the earth. By donation--either cash, Venmo, or pantry staples are warmly appreciated (olive oil, rice, beans, lentils, GF flour...)



Farm lunch often includes tasks we can do together, like de-stemming Edamame after eating (photo: Kai)

Friday Farm-To-Fork Dinners

Land Stewardship Circle

Fridays, September 4 & 18, 6:30pm, by donation

[RSVP to Lucas](#), or text 301-767-6720

At Full Table, we believe that eating should be a cause for celebration. This year, every third Thursday of the month you're invited to join us for a simple meal cooked with farm-grown & local ingredients.



Another week on the farm—what's Caleb planting? What's Goni Making? Who is that weird character? Press Ctrl-click on the pics to find out!

development of more perennial fruits and nuts, staple crops, and livestock to feed our Community from our own land.

Among all that needs to be done, we celebrate another month of deepening relationships and entering into greater reciprocity with the land and all of our relations here. May we get the chance to keep going on the journey, savoring the beauty and gifts of being on, and of, the land.

Farm Highlights

Highlights we're celebrating this August:

◆ **Goni!** He received his Bachelor's in Agricultural Education from North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University this month.

◆ **Diversity.** This year's summer Dearth Time (late August) was not too "dearthy." Green beans, watermelon, peppers, eggplant, basil, okra, and sweet potato greens are still going *strong* with mild mustards and edamame entering the scene and early summer potatoes, onions, and garlic still in good supply. We work hard to keep a wide array of veggies available for our CSA members and we're proud of what we're able to offer at a time of year when most plants are dwindling.

What's coming next:

◆ Join us to celebrate the **Fall Equinox** in the Far Field on Saturday, September 19

◆ Warm Season will turn into Cold Season in a few short months. Come enjoy a **Farm Lunch** (Tuesdays at 1:00) or **Farm Dinner** (1st and 3rd Fridays at 6:30) before the weather turns.

Governance & Communications

Our Circle is in the process of building our new Sociocratic Circle structure. We presented our latest design to our General Circle (GC) meeting on August 23. Called the Coordinating Circle in Sociocracy, the GC sits at the center of the community, connected by links to Functional Circles which carry out the work in their delegated domains. At the most basic Functional Circle level we envision four major areas:

- Community Stewardship
- Land Stewardship
- Infrastructure Stewardship
- Broader Community Stewardship

Bookmark the Dates! Gatherings TBD

General Circle

Friday-Sunday, September 18-20, time/place TBD

Autumn is coming! We'll be devising a variety of events and occasions to celebrate together and imagine all that may unfold in this next cycle. Nourishment, stargazing, fire, fun, play, inspiration, and deepening relationships are all on the list of possibilities. Invitations to come!



Pepper season is peaking and Doug is showcasing a variety he's developed for more than 20 years called Mega Marconi, which is sold in three different seed catalogs! (Photo: Kai)

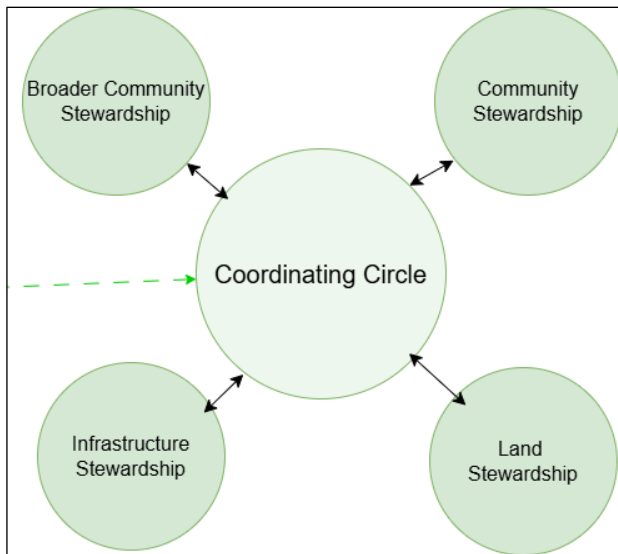
Wheel of the Year: Fall Equinox

Land Stewardship Circle

Saturday, September 19, evening time & place TBD

[Contact Kai](#) for more information and check email for details. No RSVP is needed.

These seasonal events help us to collectively regard the passage of time and honor the land and ones who came before us. The Fall Equinox can be seen as the beginning of a new cycle; a time to reflect on the bounty and lessons of the past year and prepare to start afresh. Come together to celebrate with feasting, storytelling, singing, dancing, and drumming.



New possibilities for working together are emerging

We see these as logical breakdowns, dispersing decision-making and work to be done where there's enough but not too many hands involved. We look forward to the next chapter of Common Ground, which I'll tentatively title "Dancing in the Moonlight".

Compassion Corner: Making Life More Wonderful By Ren Enberg, G&CC

Focus: Functional vs. Moralistic Judgment

Moralistic judgments label people as "good," "bad," "right," or "wrong." They focus on blame, finger-pointing, and who is at fault when our values/needs aren't met. Functional judgments ditch the blame (or shame) game entirely. Instead, they look objectively at actions to see if they actually work to meet human needs. Marshall Rosenberg, NVC's creator, famously taught that moralistic judgments are tragic expressions of our unmet needs.

Practice:

This month, notice when you label someone in your head—like calling a family member "lazy" or a coworker "unreliable" or yourself as "clumsy." Take a breath and translate that label into a functional statement: what specific need of yours isn't being met? Instead of thinking, "They are so disrespectful for being late," try shifting to: "When they arrived 15 minutes late, my need for predictability and respect for my time wasn't met." Shifting from moralistic blame to functional needs is an effective practice that can change the way you connect with yourself or others.

Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communication Circle

Saturday, September 26, 2-5pm, location TBA

[RSVP to Hope](#), subject "COG."

Community on the Ground is a monthly forum for ALL MEMBERS, with in-person conversations and a zoom link. Watch your email for details about this event!

Community Potluck

Membership Circle

Saturday, September 26, 5:30-7:30pm, after

Community on the Ground, location TBA

RSVP is helpful for set-up and location

[RSVP to Lisa](#), or text 919-619-2979

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. Watch your email for updates.



Goni and Lucas make Pizza Night's main course (photo: Kai)

Member Offerings

Rachoog's Substack posts are wonders to behold! [Click here](#) for exquisite photos and descriptions of life far (Italy) and near (you know where). Better yet, subscribe and never miss a post.

Elyse Pomeranz (Caleb's mom!) has edited an exquisite anthology of tree communicators complete with full color pictures and original artwork. Titled ***For the Trees***, this book invites readers into the next great paradigm shift: recognizing the intelligence, sensitivity, and presence of the plant kingdom, just as we have recognized the sentience of animals. [Click here](#) to read more and to order. (Hope has a copy if you are in the neighborhood and want to leaf through it!)

Membership

Our pace has been slower what with MC members traveling near and far and others dulled by ever-present August muggy heat. And yet, with the magic of Zoom, we beamed in together for rich meetings on subjects that keep coming back for more understanding:

- ◆ What are the many ways that people are part of our community and how do we visualize and describe them?
- ◆ How can we advance Engaged Members more efficiently and effectively?
- ◆ How can we meet our goal of supportive attention to our members, especially newcomers?

Now, we have two “asks” for Exploratory and Engaged Members:

- ◆ **If you don’t have your Bio on the website**, please write one and send it to Lisa (Lberley@yahoo.com). The Bios are enjoyed by all members, old and new, and are a marketing tool as well
- ◆ **All Members: fill out a new JOIN form** if you have not already done so. About a year ago, the JOIN form platform was changed. The new platform creates a directory of members and we want you in it! No need to fill in the open-ended questions; just please include all the contact info and current location, and that will be a big help. [You can access the form here](#). If you fill it out and are told that there is a user with your email already, thank you—you are IN! [Contact Quayle](#) with questions.



Okra—tasty and so beautiful, too! (photo: Kai)



“Groovy Harry” scarecrow under the rainbow (photo: Doug)

From Hope: Plant Spirit Medicine healer, Alison Gayek, is teaching a Plant Spirit Medicine Healer Training Course at the Nest in Mebane in 2027/2028. Plant Spirit Medicine calls upon the healing power of plants to bring balance to the body, mind, and spirit. It was founded by Elliot Cowan, whose book of the same name will give you an excellent introduction to this beautiful work. [Contact Alison](#) for more information.

Christian Stahlberg brings our attention to a post from Toxic Free NC. They advance environmental health and justice by advocating for safe alternatives to harmful pesticides and chemicals. [Click here](#) for the latest on keeping PFAS out of our farms, food, and water.



Mushroom love blossoms after heavy rains (photos: Kai)

