

Finding Common Ground

November, 2026

Up Front

The things we offer freely have a way of traveling farther than we ever imagined. — Kristen Freeland

If you've ever watched plants grow in a garden, you might have been amazed at how much bounty can spring from a few tiny seeds or mini plant sprouts. It's as though there's a generosity built into life that gives and gives, even when circumstances are not ideal. We see it at Common Ground when a mere 18 rows of sweet potato slips, skillfully tended, yielded about 5,000 pounds of taters – enough for some 10,000 or more servings on dinner plates. Incredible! But those potatoes didn't spring out of the ground on their own. Many volunteers showed up to ensure that none would rot underground. Afterwards, they gathered to eat, share stories, and enjoy music together under the stars—a beautiful reminder that harvest is a celebration not only of abundant food, but of being human together on the fertile earth that holds us.



Top: Garden flowers graced the Ecotour lunch table (photo: Kai)
Above: Harvesting Sweet Potatoes is a family affair (Photo: Hope)



The pond is gradually filling with water and reeds (Photo: Hope)

Community is s study in generosity. The currency is restored relationship--to the natural world, to other humans, and to work that needs doing in a world that has somehow forgotten that our health and wealth are in our ties to each other and the land. But creating an Ecovillage isn't easy. **In this Almanac, you will see myriad ways to show up and pitch in** so that we all can continue to cultivate the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible. The rewards are many—nourishment, creativity, learning, fun, connection, health, support, joy, and a deep satisfaction that comes from contributing to something larger than oneself. We hope you'll feel the call to come and help grow community, together.

Circle News Column

Governance & Communications

G&CC needs help and we're hoping you want to contribute to our wellbeing. I'm imagining many reading this will try to imagine how they would find the time and energy to join our circle when there are already so many demands on your time. **I would like you to know that there are a range of choices for your involvement,** depending on how much bandwidth you have and whether or not you're interested in being a policy member (attending regularly scheduled meetings) or an operational member (meeting as needed to do the work assigned by your circle).

Here's a list of subject areas we cover in G&CC:

- Governance systems and processes
- Sociocracy Training and Guidance
- Communications: Social Awareness Guidelines, Compassionate Communication/NVC
- Marketing: Ads, articles, events/outreach, social media
- Information & Communication Technology: Website, Riseup Listserv, DocSpace, Zoom, Tech suport

There's **no requirement** that you have interest in or knowledge about all these areas, even if you're a policy member of the main circle. **If you want to participate in any of these areas,** we would like to explore with you how you might contribute to our work. We especially need members with marketing or advertising interest/knowledge.

It's best if you're an Exploratory Member to serve as a policy member of a circle, but if you're a Visiting member, you can be an operational member of the circle. **If you're interested or have questions, email Quai, quaifranklin@gmail.com.** We're looking forward to you!



The Ecovilllage tour group gathers to learn from our Members

Meetings & Events Column

Events Snapshot

Details are in the section below Circle Meetings

- **Mondays, 7-8pm-**Racial Awareness Book Grp, Zoom
- **Tuesdays, Nov. 3 & 10, 1pm-**Community Farm lunch
- **November 6, 6:30pm-**FINAL Friday Farm dinner
- **November 14, 2-5pm-**Community on the Ground
- **November 14, 5:30-7pm-**Community Potluck
- **November 21, 10:30-4:30pm-**Sociocracy Conference
- **November 21, 6-8pm-**Elements of Mutual Aid
- **November 28, 3pm-** Gratitude & Goodies Gathering

- **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

Curious about who is on these Circles? The Leaders and Members are listed below. There are various ways to participate for Members. RSVP to the Leader listed and see how you can contribute!

Planning & Development

Wednesday, November 5, 6:30pm, at the Nest
Tuesdays, November 10 & 24, 2:30-4pm, hybrid
RSVP to Anthony with subject "P&D"
Leaders: Anthony Weston, Therese Jensen
Members: Lucas Babinec, Doug Jones, Becky Laskody, Jacob Rutz

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

Focus: Honest expression
You've probably heard people use insulting, hurtful language and then, when the receiver responds with shock or defensiveness, the person says, "I'm just being honest!" In NVC, when we refer to honest expression, we mean revealing what is in our hearts without blame, judgment, or diagnosis. Language that evaluates someone else's character or actions is seen as a tragic expression of an unmet need. True honesty is not about letting people know what is wrong with them. Instead, it is the courageous act of shining a light inward, uncovering our raw observations, feelings, and needs, and sharing them with absolute vulnerability.

Practice: Pause before you speak
For the next month, commit to catching judgments before they leave your mouth and translating them into your own internal experience. When you feel the urge to criticize someone or analyze their behavior, pause and take a breath. Ask yourself: "What am I actually observing, what am I feeling, and what do I need right now?" Instead of launching an accusation, speak only to what is true for you. By shifting your language from "You are wrong" to "I am feeling disconnected," you change the entire energy of the interaction and invite genuine connection.

General Circle

On Thursday Oct. 15th, **Common Ground Ecovillage hosted the first ever NC Ecovillage Tour for a half-day visit!** More than a dozen common ground members collaborated on the programming and our offering was very well received. It included a short tour of the garden, a somatic gratitude practice, mini lesson on harvesting sweet potatoes, and presentations touching on what community means to us— our history and the key elements we're focusing on at this moment, such as affordability, conservation, Compassionate Communication and centering our agrarian vision. Kudos to Rachoog and Janey who prepared a stellar farm-to-table lunch! This was a total team effort and we're proud that we got the opportunity to show off and share about our community in this way.

Lucas offers this reflection: *I was blown away by my experience as a tour guide over the week visiting 7*

Membership
Tuesdays, November 10, 17, 24, 3:30-4pm, via Zoom or in person at the home of Amy H. when desirable.
RSVP to Lisa with subject "Membership Circle
Leaders: *Lisa Berley, Amy Halberstadt*
Members: *Kathleen Biernat, Jacq Vorndran, Ren Enberg*
IT Liaison: *Quaye Trimble*

Land Stewardship
Tuesday, November 10, 7-8:30pm, on the land at the barn (hybrid if needed).
Contact Doug or **Lucas** w/ subject "LSC" for details
Leaders: *Doug Jones, Lucas Babinec*
Members: *Randy Dodd, Gonzalo Garcia, Janey Meadows, Quaye Trimble, Rachel Wilde, Jacob Rutz Trimble, Rachel Wilde*
Contributors: *Marilu Kelter, Goni Ronen, Paul Voss,*

Fiscal & Legal Well Being
Subcircle of Planning & Development
Thursday, November 12, 6:30-8:00pm
Thursday, November 19, 2-3:30pm
RSVP to Therese with subject "Fiscal"
Leader: *Therese Jensen*
Members: *Becky Laskody, Quaye Trimble, Jacq Vondran*

General Circle
Sunday, November 15, 6:30-8:30pm, Zoom
RSVP to Hope with subject "GC" 2 days in advance
Lucas Babinec, Lisa Berley, Quai Derr, Amy Halberstadt, Hope Horton, Therese Jensen, Doug Jones, Becky Laskody, Anthony Weston

Governance & Communications
Tuesday, November 17, 7-8:30pm, Zoom
RSVP to Quai with subject "G&CC"
Leader: *Quai Derr*
Members: *Ren Enberg, Becky Laskody, Quaye Trimble*


Goni and Elena piece together the new hoop house (Photo: Kai)

communities throughout North Carolina (including my beloved Common Ground!) I think this is the absolute best way for someone new to intentional community and ecovillages to go deep in only one week. The variety of communities we visited, plus the nature of being a microcosmic community in and of ourselves for a week (16 participants + 3 tour guides), lent itself to an incredibly diverse range of experience. Some highlights for me were: going through a get-to-know-you exercise in Earthaven's Council House, an amazing breakfast spread at Living Well community member's house, and being in a renovated tobacco barn for a workshop at Elderberry.
Ecovillage Tours (https://www.ecovillagetours.com/) offers tours of ecovillages and intentional communities all over the world. Check out what tours are coming up!"



Lucas having a blast on the Ecotour!

Land Stewardship

In the domain of Land Stewardship, the terms "capacity" and "bandwidth" are increasingly heard, as we look at the huge management needs of our infrastructure and Land. We are fortunate to have a member, Randy, with professional experience in many areas related to our Land and Water. His outline of a Land Management Plan reveals that we have bitten off a lot of projects that were initiated without a clear idea of all the work ahead of us, or who will lead the implementation of those projects.

Our Circle needs more members and more leaders! As we grow as a business, the Farm Team has been successfully developing more of the Far Field for



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 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. ***Our current book is:*** **Three or More is a Riot: Notes on How We Got Here 2012-2025,** ***by Jelani Cobb.***
This book is comprised of stand-alone essays which makes it easy to join at any point.



An Ecotour participant delights in unearthing sweet potatoes

agricultural uses. But a lot of planning and decisions still await us concerning the overall management of the Far Field. We experienced a stinging setback with the grant-funded drilling of a new water well north of the cultivated areas. The drillers went down over 400 feet and only found a small amount of available water. Underground aquifers are mysterious and elusive, and dowsing for them did not work in this case.

We need help taking care of this Land in a good way! Come help! We are planning some weekend work days, but we can use help almost any day of the week. **Pre-arrange your visit with Doug Jones at (919)444-9680 or Lucas Babinec at (301)767-6720.**



Skylar chows down on her very first solid food—farm-grown butternut squash! (photo: Amy)

Farm Highlights

🛠️ **Building food resilience, one tunnel at a time**

Our brand-new high tunnel is up! Led by Goni, with help from Elena, Caleb, and many others, this major infrastructure project strengthens our community's food resilience—protecting winter crops, optimizing summer growing conditions, and helping us grow nourishing food year-round here in central NC.

🍠 **Sweet potatoes, stew & community**

Last Sunday brought us a gorgeous fall day and around 40 people who came together to harvest one of our greatest food allies. Several rows of sweet potatoes were harvested, and a cauldron of delicious fall stew simmered over the fire. We gathered to eat, share stories, and enjoy music together—a beautiful reminder that harvest is a celebration not only of abundant food, but of being human together and the generous earth that holds us.

🥕 **Join Full Table CSA. The winter vegetables are** growing. Are you joining us? Imagine heading into winter knowing you have a steady supply of fresh, flavorful

Tuesday Community Farm Lunch

Land Stewardship Circle

Tuesdays, November 3 & 10, 1:00 pm, by donation

RSVP to Lucas, or text 301-767-6720

*These will be the **final Farm Lunches** of the year, so be sure to come enjoy a simple, nourishing meal prepared straight from the garden + thoughtful conversation with good humans who care about the earth. Cooking and sharing meals is an essential part of our Community. By donation-- cash, Venmo, or pantry staples are warmly appreciated (olive oil, rice, beans, lentils, GF flour...)*

Friday Farm-To-Fork Dinner

Land Stewardship Circle

Friday, November 6, 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 is the LAST Farm Dinner of the year**. You are invited to join us for a simple meal cooked with farm-grown & local ingredients.*

Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communication Circle

Saturday, November 14, 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, November 14, 5:30-7:30pm, after COG

RSVP to Lisa, or text 919-619-2979—helpful for set-up and location

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.



Planting Cold Season crops—just a few CSA spots left! (Photo: Kai)

vegetables grown right here in your community—by farmers you know and trust, using practices you feel good about supporting. **Our Cold Season begins November 30,** and we're wrapping up enrollment soon so our Farm Team can prepare for the season ahead. If you've been considering joining us, now's the time!
Claim your Cold Season Harvest Share.

Membership

Common Ground Ecovillage is co-sponsoring an event to watch and discuss *"The Elements of Mutual Aid, Chapter 2: Earth*" on November 21, 6-8pm. This series was made to be a tool for community learning and reflective, strategy-building conversations to transform our mutual aid efforts into deeply relational, strategic, and revolutionary practices, together. **See the listing in the Events section to RSVP**.

In October, the Membership Circle continued to respond to new members and invite them for tours of the land, community events and phone conversations**.** We stewarded membership advancement and are reviewing feedback on the JOIN form. We helped in a variety of ways to support the Ecovillage Tour visit to Common Ground and were thoroughly energized by the experience.

We started a new practice at our meetings. Following the Opening Round, we read and reflect on a paragraph of the CGEV Cultural Agreements. We find this to be grounding and inspiring and encourage other circles to try it out. Many people in the community have helped draft policies for living together and gathering on the land. Some are complete and others are on the way. The Membership Circle will be reviewing several that are almost complete in this next month: Cars and Parking, Firearms and Weapons and Pets/Animals. We would love to have your feedback. You can find them here CLICK .

AFFORDABLE - ARE YOU KIDDING?

News and information to help make it so
By Therese Jensen, Fiscal & Legal Well Being

Our approach to affordability is unique and multi-faceted. **See how Common Ground is making Affordability work HERE.** The Area Median Income chart for 2026 is **HERE.** To figure your own Area Median Income, use the amount from your most recent tax return, adjusted gross income line, then make any adjustments you anticipate for 2027 adjusted gross income.

Sociocracy for All Conference—Fumbling Better Together

General Circle
November 21, 10:30-4:30pm, online
Contact Becky--the first 5 CGEV members can attend for free! Or, **Click here to register** (rate from $20-$240)
CGEV is an organizational member of Sociocracy for All. Many of us recently filled out a survey to help us assess how well we are using sociocracy at Common Ground Ecovillage as our governance system. Sociocracy for All is providing us with their recommendations based on these results to help us improve our training and our practice of sociocracy, including rounds, consent decision-making, circle organization, and feedback cycles. We get a written report, and ***they will provide feedback and answer our questions at this Conference.*** *There is so much more to learn if you choose to attend!*



Sadly, Elena leaves us on Sunday. She's been a terrific Land Learner. We'll all miss her and hope she stays in touch! (Photo: Kai)

Elements of Mutual Aid, Chapter Two: Earth

Membership Circle, co-sponsor
Saturday, Nov. 21, 6-8pm
Contact Amy H: amyhalberstadt3@gmail.com for the venue location and potential carpooling opportunities
This series focuses on how to grow and sustain community connections and also ways of developing community resiliency that are relational and independent of the state and capitalism. Come and watch and discuss afterwards.

Gathering of Gratitude and Goodies

Membership Circle
Saturday, November 28, 3-7pm, at the Nest
RSVP to Hope will be greatly appreciated
Each year, we share bounty and warmth with each other through food, conversation, and connection. Bring along your leftovers, favorite songs and games. This event will be as amazing as you are!

Planning & Development

By the time this Almanac hits the press we will likely have the final hookups for the water system, and thus the infrastructure actually and at long last will be complete. WAHOO! Your "Infrastruction" Management Team (have you seen the T-shirts?) – Randy and Anthony – are delighted to be at this point, and hope you are too. There is more work to do, though, and some of it still with MEC, our prime site contractor. Right now the key remaining task is re-seeding. With all the dry weather we have lost a lot of the initial seeding. Some decent growth is still needed for erosion control as well as aesthetics, so a good bit of the spring and summer's plantings need to be re-seeded and sprout before we can be officially accepted by County Erosion Control. Thanks to Randy for continuing to manage this frustrating but necessary business – and thank him when you see a beautiful field of flowers! You can thank Anthony and Goni when the water lines don't freeze (trusting they won't)—insulation is the key task ahead of the coming cold.

Planning continues by the Design Review Circle to bring member-builders a more extensive guide to the building process and a support collection of designs and related documents. Meantime anyone with questions or ideas is encouraged to be in touch proactively with Jacob (rutzjc@gmail.com) who is now the Leader of the Circle, and/or Anthony, Paul and Amy Leach who are the other members. Don't be shy! Folks who want to join this work are also very welcome to be in touch.

Also on the front burner is the siting and design of the Common House. As we have said before, this question involves a number of complicated and interdependent factors, and as of press time we're still not entirely sure how we're going to sort them all out. Though we disagree on some aspects, we're *agreed* that we want to locate the Common House on lot 9 or 10 to anchor and ground the Commons around the GrandOaks. We're also agreed that we want to maximize residential opportunities on the land to achieve a larger community to spread the work, the joy, and financial support. Part of the challenge is that given county rules, these two basic goals may not be completely or easily compatible.

It is possible that we might want to build the house as a residential unit on lots 9 or 10, or as a nonresidential "neighborhood amenity" that would be much fuller more fully featured but could not house anyone. No perfect choice but, well, we are working on it. But more of that anon! We'd also just note that concurrently we are very



Hearts-a-burstin's glorious seed pod (Photo: Hope)

Member Offerings

From Hope: Plant Spirit Medicine healer, Alison Gayek, is offering a 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. **Join Alison on Friday, November 20, 3:00 pm EDT for a free class overview followed by a Q&A session.** Register here, or Contact Alison for more info.



Laurie Creech won not one, but TWO blue ribbons for her tasty bakes at the NC State Fair! Anyone who has sampled her scrumptious desserts at Farm Lunches and Dinners knows that these awards were richly deserved!



Rachel and Amy lug sweet potatoes from field to truck (photo: Kai)

pleased to be developing a relationship with a local enthusiastic and energetic natural builder, Stephen Hren, and architect, Alex Buck, for Common House plan development.

On the financial side, what used to be the Financial & Legal Subcircle is now reconstituting itself as Fiscal and Legal Well-being Circle— a wider and more heartful ambit. Parallel Treasurers and legal structures are being set up for the Owners Association alongside the LLC, and intricate financial planning is underway to clarify and resolve equity issues and others as we transition into the new bipartite arrangement. Thank Therese and Becky especially for navigating these waters so attentively and so capably, with the help of Jacq, Kira, Quaye, and others!

And again, gotta say, like all of the people and projects mentioned here, they still could use more help. If you are not yet involved with Circle work, now is the time!

Many Turtles Learning Collective

Our website (see here) is almost complete, thanks to early work from Lucas and Chari Smith and most recently the diligence, creativity, and skill of Christian Stalberg. We have also been able to offer two workshop/circles this month: Tessie and Deja offered a Unisong Circle October 3 and Aria Lee offered a drying, collecting, and creating a dried flower bouquet workshop October 25. We continue to develop and explore ways in which workshops can provide resiliency and warmth in the community and also ways to smooth the pathway for more folk to provide workshops. Please keep your workshops and circle ideas coming! (send to Amy H, Lucas, Lisa B, and Krystal)



Splashes of Cosmos spark orange joy in the farm garden (Photo: Kai)



Oswaldo loads truckload after truckloadsFwith Sweet Potatoes harvested this fall—about 5,000 pounds in all! (Photo: Kai)



Goni stirs a cast iron cauldron of stew—a hearty treat after a long day in the Sweet Potato field. (Photo: Kai)



Goldenrod spears yet bloom in the fields (Photo: Hope)