

Finding Common Ground

December, 2026

Up Front

"Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul." – Samuel Ullman

Another year is nearly under our belt at Common Ground. Another year of connecting, growing community, and preparng the earth to build homes. Another year of looking back with amazement and gratitude at all we've achieved and also with awareness of the many challenges yet to come. Devotion to this Community runs wide and deep. Why? Because we feel that something more whole is possible by learning to "village" again, forging ways of life in justice & harmony with each other and the land.



Playing in the late Autumn sunshine (Photo: Kai)



Top: Rainbow Chard brightens the Cold Season garden (photo: Kai)
Above: Tucking in the crops before the first frost (Photo:Kai)

You'll notice fewer events listed this month in favor of "pop-up" work parties for everything from making Elderberry syrup and marking trails to organizing and beautifying spaces on the land. Our Circles will be making big decisions about ownership models and Common House placement, among other activities. The TrueVoice team will be sharing the results of their intensive study of the Community, yielding rich understandings of who we are and potent language to supercharge our marketing and fundraising efforts. This is all BIG WORK in service of a more vital and connected way of life. **And there is room for you to get to know us and contribute your gifts.** Take a tour of the land. Come to an event. Sit in on meetings. Talk with members about what matters to you. Help out on the Farm. However you choose to show up, we look forward to getting to know you!

Circle News Column

Planning & Development

On P&D's front burner in November has been the siting and overall character of the Common House. As usual, this question involves a number of complicated and interdependent factors.

We're agreed that we want to maximize residential opportunities on the land, to achieve a larger community to spread the work and joy… and also financial support. But it hasn't been the easiest to get a clear sense both of our regulatory and financial possibilities, nor to reach agreement among ourselves, with the input of GC besides, about the crucial specific questions.

But now agreed is this: the Common House will be a structure on the LLC/farm land, which we favor for its very light County regulation and oversight, bare-bones tax burden, the possibility of funding partly through Many Turtles contributions if used in part for educational purposes, and fewer building restrictions, such as lack of required setbacks. Undecided still, though, is whether to reclassify one of the current residential lots (9 or 10) to LLC/farm land in order to build the building there, or to place it on already established LLC/farm land between the barn and the parking area. We are working on it! Another crucial feature will be the funding strategy, and the Financial and Legal Well-Being Subcircle will be bringing forward alternatives to COG and GC shortly. We think we can pull it off, but it will take everyone's energetic engagement and contributions.



Sage and Goni build a pump house for the new Farm well (Photo: Kai)

Meetings & Events Column

Events Snapshot

Details are in the section below Circle Meetings

- **Mondays, 7-8pm-**Racial Awareness Book Grp, Zoom
- **December 12, 2-5pm-**Community on the Ground
- **December 12, 5:30-7pm-**Community Potluck
- **December 19, 5:30pm onward,** Winter Solstice
- **December ???** Keep an eye out for pop-up work parties at the farm!

- **All gatherings are in Eastern Time** and open to open to all members, guests, and/or registrants 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!

Membership

Tuesdays, December 1 & 15, 3:00-4:30pm. Task meetings on alternate weeks as needed. 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*

In the meantime we are happy to report that we are developing a strong relationship with an enthusiastic and supportive local natural builder, Stephen Hren, and associated architect Alex Buck, for Common House planning and construction. Stephen has already begun testing the clay soils for weight-bearing construction uses using cob. If all goes according to plan we should be able (and in fact we'll need to) start the cob construction by mid spring. Let's wish ourselves luck!

Site work on the land is now mostly limited to final checks on the water system, and re-grading and re-seeding grass and other seed mixes to get some growth on the land after the long drought killed off much of the first planting – necessary for both aesthetics and for erosion control (closely watched by the county). Recent rain so welcome!
A number of members have architectural plans in process at one level or another, and the Design Review Subcircle is gearing up to actively engage all of you. Several meetings with prospective design/build firms have been or soon will be held, and some individual consultations are ongoing. Everyone at any stage of the process is encouraged to be in touch proactively. Jacob is the Leader of the Subcircle; Anthony, Paul and Amy L. are the other members. Don't be shy! Folks who want to join this work are also very welcome to be in touch.

Land Stewardship

The change in seasons reached its peak this past month with vibrant fall colors our first serious frosts and 'daylight savings' creating sunsets at 5pm. The days are shorter and the energy goes down and inward. The tending and cultivation of relationships rooted in reciprocity continues on the land.

Walks down to the pond, still a small fraction of what it was and we hope it will refill into being (El Niño please bring us some significant -- AND balanced -- rains in December 🙏🏽🙏🏾), continue to reveal turtle and frog sightings. No bass yet though. Watch out for the hornet's nest near the north east corner of the pond! Oh, is that another Mebane city leaf truck headed out to the far field?! We receive the organic matter and plan for how to best spread it.

The Grand Oaks hang onto their leaves until the last moment, the squirrels munch and also hide the bountiful acorns, and all kinds of birds flock to feed on the goldenrod seed beneath the sumac branches. Every day, every season, this land becomes more vibrant and full of

Planning & Development
Tuesdays, December 8 & 22, 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

Land Stewardship
Tuesday, December 8, 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,*
Contributors: *Marilu Kelter, Goni Ronen, Paul Voss,*

Fiscal & Legal Well Being
Subcircle of Planning & Development
Thursday, December 10, 6:30-8:00pm
Thursday, December 17, 2-3:30pm
RSVP to Therese with subject "Fiscal"
Leader: *Therese Jensen*
Members: *Becky Laskody, Quaye Trimble, Jacq Vondran*

General Circle
Sunday, December 13, 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, December 15, 7-8:30pm, Zoom
RSVP to Quai with subject "G&CC"
Leader: *Quai Derr*
Members: *Ren Enberg, Becky Laskody, Quaye Trimble*



Goni makes the barn stairs safer for kids by installing balusters (Photo: Abigail)

vitality because of our care. Even during drought, even after infrastructure construction, this place has a greater pulse because of our presence as two-leggeds.

We hope to host some work parties in December before the holidays. Tasks include processing frozen elderberries, organizing waste wood and logs on various lots, tending and beautifying the space around Grandmother Oak, marking trails, and mulching a newly plowed field with leaves. **Please reach out to Lucas** and ask about coming out to nurture relationships with the land and each other. In this season of gratitude, it is in our support and sharing that we ensure good possibility of more mutual thriving for all."



Oswaldo and the Daikon radish-turned-horn (Photo: Kai)

Farm Highlights

A full table for Cold Season! Our Cold Season CSA membership is full, and we're delighted to welcome back so many beloved members, along with some new faces, for another winter of eating with the seasons. Cold Season begins November 30. Here's to the carrots, greens, roots, and all the good things ahead!

Coming Up

The Farm Team Reveal ~ Keep an eye out Thanksgiving week as we reveal our secret identities. We're pulling back the curtain to reveal the deeper mission behind Full Table—and inviting you to be part of it. There's more to this little vegetable farm than meets the eye!

Seven months of growing, eating, and gathering! We've wrapped up another abundant Warm Season at Full Table with seasonal vegetables, delicious farm lunches and dinners, seasonal celebrations, and Community Farm Days spent planting and harvesting some of our staple crops. We're also celebrating our 2026 Land Learners—Jakob, Terrace, Sage, Elena, and Ben—who brought their



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.

Community on the Ground (COG)

Governance & Communication Circle

Saturday, December 12, 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!



A Passionflower still blooming in November! (Photo: Abigail)

curiosity, energy, and helping hands to the farm throughout the season. We're grateful for a season of nourishment, hard work, learning, and community.

Governance & Communications

G&CC is grateful to have received expressions of interest in participating in the work of our circle, especially marketing. We had a couple of new members that were able to make it to our November meeting to observe and from whom we took questions and discussed how they might get involved. We're looking forward to growing all of our new relationships.

At this meeting we discussed various ways to market our community and we're currently researching potential costs and benefits. G&CC looks forward to receiving the products of the True Voice process when it's available. We're also close to switching over to our new website. Quaye continues his dedicated efforts to improving our web presence. We hope to begin user acceptance testing within the next couple of months.

We hope you'll come to our next meeting on Dec. 15, 7-8:30pm to observe, and potentially share your ideas. Please send an email to gov-com@commonground.eco

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

Focus: Prioritizing Connection - It's that family and friend reunion time of year! For many, it is an emotionally complex season, mixing layers of joy, sadness, stress, nostalgia, anticipation, anxiety, and many other emotions. So I decided to keep it simple and offer an "elevator pitch" about NVC that I came up with and want to keep high in my own awareness this month: "NVC is the practice of prioritizing warm connection over being right or getting someone to do, think, or believe something I want them to."

I can advise you that people tend to respond defensively when you tell them what is "wrong" with them, what their motives are, or what they *should* do or think. And I can remind you that most people enjoy hearing specific appreciations for something they did or said that had a positive impact on you. But at the end of the day, NVC means supporting that warm, sweet connection that feels authentic and mutual. Prioritize that, in your own words, in your own way, and you're "living NVC." Happy Holidays! With love and gratitude, Ren

Community Potluck

Membership Circle
Saturday, December 12, 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.



Storytelling by firelight with Kai (Photo: Hope)

Wheel of the Year: Winter Solstice

Land Stewardship Circle
Saturday, December 19, 5:30pm Potluck, 6:30pm fire circle. No RSVP is needed
If you like being on the land, dear humans, and festive gatherings that are simple instead of hectic, mark your calendar for this event. We will be honoring the longest night of the year together with food, fire, music-making, story, singing, and dance.

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, December 11, 2:00 pm EDT for a free class overview followed by a Q&A session.** Register here, or Contact Alison for more info.



Jascha Rose helps with the harvest (Photo: Abigail)

Membership

In this time of reflection, we are thinking about what justice means in our community and how we are working to achieve it. Economic justice–Therese and the Full Table CSA folks! Racial justice—the Racial Awareness Book Group! Justice in our relationships! Let us grow together in our understanding & actions this coming year.

Who would have imagined that in the midst of a serious all community meeting (COG) dancing would break out to the lively and popular Italian song, *Bella Ciou*, sent to us by Jacq. Energized by the music, we hooked arms, switched partners, got all our tensions out and were ready to resume the meeting! Let this be the beginning of a new tradition. Thank you, Jacq, for bringing us into your Italian experience a little bit and supporting our social, economic, political change agency!
At that same COG meeting, people were asked what they want to learn about/experience for membership nourishment and growth in the New Year. Here are some great ideas that were offered: NVC learning opportunities; Town Hall open sharing; repairing conflict/harm in relationships past and present; relating in new ways (capture the flag, silent retreat, poker, geo caching); Eurythmy for the community; aging in community; programs for learning that also bring in money! Keep the ideas coming and volunteer to lead.

The Membership Circle has been pondering the value that discernment holds in our community processes. We remembered the sociocratic process of annual self-evaluation/discernment for the Operational Leader (OL) and Elected Representative (ER) and realized it had been a long time since we had done this. We have taken the time to reflect on our roles and got feedback from our circle family. It was a positive and freeing experience that we recommend for every circle member.

From Marilu—Sweet Potato Brownies!
Marilu brought these to a recent Community on the Ground Potluck and they were SCRUMPTIOUS. What a great way to create with sweet potatoes which are so abundant this year. Click here for the recipe, which is very similar to Marilu's (minus the love we know she infused into every crumb)!

Parting comments from Ben, our most recent Land Learner: *"The excitement and engagement of all the people here has really been encouraging to me, especially coming from a little bit more cynical, "it's a hard world out there" attitude from the training program I was in...People are excited to be here, and they are optimistic about the future, and have all sorts of ideas for creative ways to make a better future. That has been really refreshing to me. I really do want to someday be part of a community like this, where it's not just people working together at a business, but people living together and sharing meals and supporting each other. And then the other side is realizing how complicated it is—how tough it is to make decisions that everybody is happy with."*



Best buds, Jascha and Santi share a snack in the Barn kitchen (Photo: Abigail)