



Garry Ion

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Location: Cumbria, Britain



What I do: Supporting and connecting with people on the margins, especially men, through practical work in Community Shed groups.



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

Thank you for journeying with me during what has been a tough few months for the Community Shed in Carlisle. The uncertainty surrounding its future has been especially concerning for the members we seek to support. We all considered the shed our home and even our church. Your words of encouragement have meant so much. Members' families and friends have contacted us to share their concern too, sharing how members' relationships have improved at home because of their time in the shed. At the core of our mission is the desire to introduce and share God's love through conversation as we get to know each other. I can confidently say that this holistic ministry has served as a lifeline for several shed friends struggling with their mental health. It remains a sobering statistic that every week, one person in and around Carlisle loses their life to suicide.



October 2025 at the shed

To bring you up to date with the latest news, Carlisle diocese and the charity Restore Cumbria announced the closure of the shed in the summer. This is due to financial reasons. We held our last regular workshop meeting and put on an early Christmas party at the end of October. We didn't want to call it a farewell! At the beginning of November, along with dedicated volunteers, we moved the contents of the shed – including woodworking machinery, a heavy pool table and sofas – from the upstairs Community Space into nearby safe storage. We are grateful to Restore Cumbria for providing this temporary solution, allowing us to hold on to our valuable equipment for now. By mid-November, we had taken down our shed sign and returned the keys to the landlord.

Since the closure of the shed, we regularly meet with community friends for a catch-up at the Restore charity shop in the centre of Carlisle. The shop has been welcoming, offering a comfortable seating area and providing free refreshments. While it doesn't replace the shed, we're thankful for this space.

I acknowledge that the past few months has been personally challenging too. Over the past five years a lot of time and energy has been put into setting up and running the shed. I've seen first-hand the positive impact our meetings have had on everyone concerned, me included! The sense of community we've built

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**With Jesus
With each other
To the edges**



has been incredibly important to us all. I think back to the time I was readjusting to life back in the UK, when I was caring for my parents and then dealing with their loss. I received special care and support from friends in the shed. The tables have turned so many times – lately Christian friends from the shed continue to remind me we are not alone in our struggles, repeating back a Bible verse I had shared with them when we first opened the shed after lockdown; Matthew 11:28–30 (NLT):

Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach

you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.”

Thank you, Lord, for our time in the Community Shed, for friendship and fellowship. “As iron sharpens iron, so we sharpen one another”. Thank you that friends from the shed have helped me keep things in perspective over the past few months – while budgets and strategic plans are important, they pale into insignificance when trusting in you!

As I write, I understand conversations are ongoing about a real possibility of relaunching a shed in the New Year. We have identified a new venue, not too far from the old one, and it looks hopeful that funds to cover the rent have been secured. From recent experience it is vital we find answers to questions about sustainability, including running costs, staffing, attracting volunteers with the skills to help run the shed, and my post as a CMS mission partner. To commit further, I need to overcome the widening shortfall in my personal support through CMS. Please share this news as we consider the shed’s future and my continued partnership.

As it stands, my funding is not sustainable. However, I know I serve a God who provides. Please pray with me for my funding to increase so that I can continue to serve God at the edges. If you are able to increase your regular giving or give an additional gift this year, I would really appreciate you prayerfully considering it. You can give online at **churchmissionsociety.org/ion**, by calling **01865 787489**, or if you received this letter by post, by completing the enclosed form. Thank you so much for walking on this mission journey with me.

I hope pictures shared in this letter, showing the dismantling of the shed, can soon be replaced with pictures of us moving into a new Community Shed. At this time, it seems a huge uphill struggle, but in the Lord’s service, his will be done!

With many thanks for reading this update and your prayerful support in the matter.

Garry



Photos from top to bottom: Our last few projects and HOPE! before dismantling the shed; moving the contents of the shed into temporary storage; Garry mopping out the empty shed; taking down the sign



Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus

It’s so encouraging to hear news from other CMS partners sharing the hope of Jesus with people not yet connected to churches. In the UK, CMS’s Pioneer Mission Training programme is equipping people to respond creatively to the Holy Spirit beyond the boundaries of traditional church. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at **churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope**

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