



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



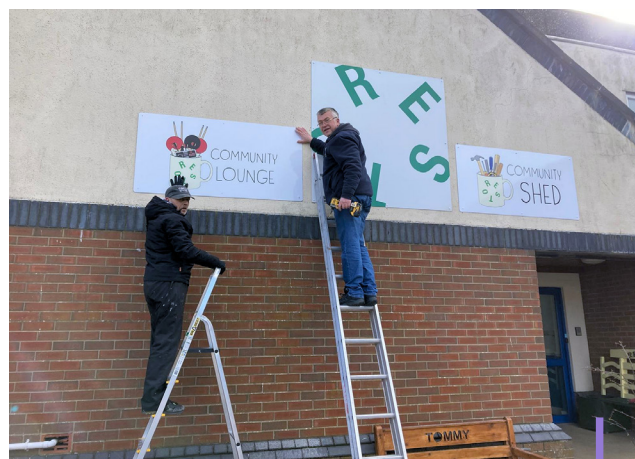
Discovering creative ways to share the hope of Jesus with people unconnected to church

Dear friends,

Greetings from the Community Shed in Carlisle. In case you didn't know, we were able to reopen in February after the previous Shed closed last November. This closure was due to financial challenges faced by the warehouse where we were previously located. We owe a huge thanks to the local community for their incredible support in helping us find and renovate this building so quickly, turning it from derelict offices into a larger, spacious workshop and welcoming lounge. Our new Shed also includes a comfortable seating and games area, toilets, kitchen facilities, an office, a computer station and a quiet room we call the snug. A huge task has been making sure building and workshop equipment now meet all necessary regulations.

I have also undergone a revamp myself(!), completing various training and refresher courses to meet required standards. Life somehow felt less complicated in Africa! To name but a few, subjects covered food hygiene, food allergies, fire marshalling, general health and safety, safeguarding and first aid. As I write, my secondment agreement is being finalised between CMS, the Diocese of Carlisle and the charity Restore. I again step out in faith, as we are yet to find the necessary funding to support my role for the full three-year secondment. I also pray that volunteers with practical skills can be found to supplement the supervision in the Shed so that the workshop can remain open as much as possible. Currently, Rev Chris Harwood, pioneer chaplain, and I are the only two full-time workers. Restore continues to manage our administration and governance.

Now that everything is in place, we can concentrate on the important task of welcoming both new and returning friends to the Shed. Fortunately, by Easter, many of our previous members had returned. Also, referral agencies are once again trusting us with clients they believe would be well suited to Shed activities. One of our long-term referral partners, The Well Communities, is conveniently located in the same building as the Shed and the charity shares many of our values in providing holistic support. They specialise in residential rehabilitation programmes for men and women who struggle with mental health issues, addiction and homelessness. We've started inviting these friends and their staff to join us for our lounge activities on Wednesday evenings. Together, we prepare meals for about 30 people, share a simple supper,



Putting up signs outside the new Shed

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



play games – including pool and table tennis – and enjoy each other's company. We hope that members of The Well Communities will maintain their connections with the Shed as they finish their residential programmes and work on rebuilding their lives in the local community.

The reopening of the Shed has surpassed all we have prayed for, and we can clearly see God's hand at work. The old Shed provided essential care to some very vulnerable people, and it

was a huge blow to us all when it closed, especially since these friends took time to learn to trust us and had already felt isolated in the community. Thankfully, we now have a space where we can gather over a cuppa and make crafts, allowing us to share in life and faith once again. In my experience, whether on a construction site in Africa or in Carlisle, it's during simple conversations that trust and friendship grow, and the seed of the gospel has the opportunity to take root. This pattern of life was lived out by Jesus.

In Kiwoko Hospital, Uganda, where I first served from 1995, I frequently wrote about the local builders I lived and worked alongside. One of these young men (I was also young back then!) was William, who came from an impoverished background and had little education. Through our everyday conversations, our friendship and faith grew, and like me, he later returned to school to pursue studies in engineering and then Bible school. William eventually succeeded me as the facilities manager at the hospital in 2001.

He wrote to me this week, "I hope this message finds you well. It is quite some time since we last spoke and I am writing to share some milestones with you as someone who was a foundation pillar of what God has done through me. I completed 30 years of engineering service at Kiwoko Hospital in April. The church in the village where I am the leader has grown to a congregation of over 1,000 and I have now decided to leave the hospital and take up a full-time ministry in the church. We have outgrown the old church building and I am now sketching out the plans to build another. I am sending you this update not because I am asking for anything but to thank you for your investment in my life...."

I sincerely want to thank you for investing in my life; your time spent reading these letters, your prayers and your financial support have truly made a difference. God has answered our prayers way beyond my human expectations!

In his service,

Garry



Photos from top to bottom: Clearing out the derelict offices to make way for a community lounge; Garry and community helpers help the new workshop take shape; Ian and Garry in the new workshop making a bird table; William and Garry on the Kiwoko Hospital building site, Uganda, 2001



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 Honduras, mission partners are providing mentoring for children who are likely to drop out of school, or not receive any education. They are introducing them to education and to the love of Jesus. Read more and get inspired by other stories of hope at churchmissionsociety.org/bringhope

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