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Study Guide and Mission Resource

grace at the garbage dump

making sense of mission in the twenty-first century



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Introduction

Across the church, there's a growing realization that in order for the church to remain vibrant, it must become more engaged with the issues of poverty, illness, and injustice that beset the world. The decision by many church organizations to make the Millennium Development Goals a programmatic statement is one indication of this commitment. This involvement with issues of the world is seen as one way the church can take its role in God's mission, a phrase that is used increasingly in many churches.

But how do local congregations and dioceses best respond to the pressing challenges of the world? What does "mission" mean? How can the church be true to the good news it has to proclaim while at the same time being relevant to the world around it?

It is these questions that *Grace at the Garbage Dump: Making Sense of Mission in the Twenty-First Century* seeks to address. Drawing on his years of experience as a young adult missionary of the Episcopal Church, Jesse Zink tells the stories of the people he encountered while working in a shantytown community built on a garbage dump in South Africa. In his work with patients with AIDS, students struggling in a failing school, and women in a micro-credit program, Jesse reflects on what mission means, how the Gospel calls us to respond to the poorest of the poor, and the concrete steps the church can take to do so.

This study guide is a supplement to the book, which is available in your local bookstore, online, or for your e-reader. (Ordering information, including information on bulk discounts, is at the end of this guide.) Congregations and church groups looking for ways to be involved in responding to issues of injustice in the world, whether down the street or around the world, can read *Grace at the Garbage Dump* together and use this guide to reflect on where and how God is calling them into action. The study guide is suitable for a congregational mission/outreach committee, a youth group preparing for a mission trip, or any other church group discerning its next steps forward.

The guide divides *Grace at the Garbage Dump* into five sections, though the sections can be combined or divided to create more or fewer sessions depending on how much time the group has to commit to reading the book together. Each section provides a short summary of the

chapters under consideration and then offers questions for reflection and conversation. Because the guide is designed with a variety of different groups in mind, not all questions will be appropriate for all groups. Groups, of course, are encouraged to develop their own questions and conversation themes as they read the book together.

It is clear that the church has a role to play in responding to the needs of the world and that God's mission is at the center of that response. How each congregation does so is for them to discern. This guide is offered as a resource to that holy task.

Section 1: Arriving... and failing

Chapters 1, 2, and 3

Overview: Everyone looking to be involved in mission has a motivation for doing so. Sometimes, however, those motivations are unclear even to the people involved. This section provides an opportunity for the group to consider why they are interested in mission, what has brought them to this point, and where they hope to go from here. The section is also an opportunity to begin thinking about the initial challenges and obstacles that are present in every mission situation.

Summary: Jesse Zink makes clear in the first chapter that he has a high opinion of himself and his abilities. “I came to South Africa,” he writes, “because I had a modest Messiah complex.” (p. 4) At the same time, he is clear that the word “missionary” bothers him. He associates it with too many negative stereotypes related to colonialism and oppression. Nonetheless, he sets out for a shantytown community in South Africa full of energy and enthusiasm to help the people of the community and even, perhaps, “save” them.

From the very first he encounters major challenges. In the story that opens the book, he finds himself helpless while riding to the hospital with a man dying of AIDS. His previous medical training is of little use in a situation with so little resources. Later, he realizes how steep a language barrier there is for his work in Itipini: he only speaks English; they speak Xhosa, one of South Africa’s eleven official languages. “The truth was I was hopelessly unprepared,” he writes. (p. 23) He couldn’t “save” anyone if he couldn’t communicate with them.



Fumanekile, shortly before his death

The community in which Zink worked was called Itipini, a word that means “at the dump.” The name comes from Itipini’s location: it is a shantytown community built on a garbage dump on the edge of a city called Mthatha. Zink compares his mission strategy to the Incarnation: just as God crossed the barrier between human and divine so Zink crossed a barrier between his background—rich, educated, white—and that of people in Itipini—poor, uneducated, and African. His first day in Itipini, Zink writes, “was the beginning of my existence-sharing with the people of Itipini. It was the beginning of my vulnerability.” (p. 17)

As he struggles to learn Xhosa, Zink also struggles to feel useful and needed. Because of the language and culture barriers, he is unable to do much beyond counting pills and filing cards



Siphisihle (right) in pre-school

in the clinic. “Counting pills was not exactly what I had had in mind when I resolved to move to Africa,” Zink writes. (p. 26) But slowly, he finds, he is able to do something. Over time, he develops relationships with the patients who come to the clinic every day for tuberculosis medication. In particular, he works closely with a young girl named Siphisihle whose home life poses many challenges and who, as a result, is not getting her medication.

Eventually, after much close work over weeks and months, her TB is cured. Zink realizes, as he writes, “the barriers that so defined my first few weeks and months in Itipini were—ever so slightly—beginning to crumble.” (p. 31)

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- Zink lists several motivations for his decision to become a missionary. Which ones resonate with you?
- What do we learn about God in the Incarnation? How can we take those lessons into our mission efforts?

- Zink discusses the difficulties he had with the terms “mission” and “missionary.” In what ways do you understand these words?
- What are the dangers of approaching the situation intent on “saving” those involved?
- Do “small victories” like Siphisihle’s tuberculosis medication make up for or compensate for the expense of putting someone like Zink in a place like Itipini?
- Zink says he felt overwhelmed in the back of the truck with Fumanekile. Have you ever felt overwhelmed and unable to help in a situation of obvious need? How did you respond?
- When is a time that you have tried to help someone else and failed? What did you learn from the experience?
- What sort of preparation is necessary for mission? What preparation is particularly important for this group’s mission trip?

Section 2: Learning How to be of Use

Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Overview: Enthusiasm and energy for mission are one thing; translating that into concrete results is entirely another. This section poses more questions about the challenges of mission, while also identifying concrete examples of ways to help. It is an opportunity for the group to begin thinking about what gifts they bring to mission and how they can best be matched to the needs the group encounters. The section also raises critical questions of cultural difference and is a chance for the group to begin to think seriously about the culture in which they seek to work.

Summary: In chapter 4, Zink introduces a distinction between *doing* and *being*. Whereas in his life in the United States, he had measured himself by how much he had accomplished, he writes in his journal that “I need to realize that perhaps the greatest gift I can give right now is that of a loving and supportive presence. I won’t be able to quantify the results of my work. I am not at peace with this.” (p. 33) He takes this new attitude with him to the pre-school in Itipini where he at first struggles with the overwhelming mass of children who are eager for his attention. It is a frustrating situation and he lets his anger show in front of the children.



A pre-school lesson in Itipini

His answer comes in the form of his guitar. By leading the children in song—everything from “When the Saints Go Marching In” to “Johnny B. Goode”—he realizes he can be of some use in the community. “It wasn’t, as near as I could tell, saving anyone, but it was something,” he writes. (p. 39)

The experience with the pre-school children gives him the confidence to start branching out beyond the clinic in Itipini. He begins to work with Mkuseli, the director of the after-school program in Itipini. Mkuseli expresses an interest in a library and Zink starts collecting donated



Mkuseli and the iPod

books. At first, there is lots of potential in the project. But then things begin to change. The library is in one of the shipping containers used by the after-school program. When Zink isn't around, he learns, Mkuseli tells the children in the library to leave. The library limps along, dependent on Zink's presence for its success.

Mkuseli also has charge of the garden in which the after-school students are supposed to learn about agriculture. But Zink realizes Mkuseli is managing the garden to produce vegetables; student learning is a distinctly secondary goal. As he probes more into the situation, Zink realizes that their different cultural backgrounds have given him and Mkuseli fundamentally different ways of looking at the world. "Part of being

incarnational, I realized, was that my efforts were mediated through the preexisting staff and network of relationships into which I entered when I decided to work in Itipini," he writes. (p. 50) That hampers (in some ways) and aids (in others) his ability to do the work he wants to do. Either way, it is a fundamental reality of his work.

The final chapter of this section concerns Zink's nascent effort to help students after school. With a handful of female high school students, he begins reading *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* to help them gain confidence in their English. There is mixed success but the group holds together and some students even begin to come to Zink for help with their homework. After helping several students, he comes to



Reading *Charlie*

understand how few resources they have in school. He also realizes how the help he can provide the students is limited relative to the scale of obstacles they face. Still, the group keeps at it and modest learning begins to take place. “Now when I found myself frustrated, I could fall back on comforting thoughts of success about what my time in Itipini had amounted to,” he writes. “And slowly, without perhaps realizing it at first, I knew I might need more than a single year in Itipini.” (p. 61)

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- What gifts does this group bring to mission? In what ways, unexpected or not, can they best be used?
- Is the distinction between *being* and *doing* useful? In what ways does it hold true in your experience? In what ways does it not?
- Although Zink begins chapter four by writing about the importance of *being*, he ends the chapter with *doing*: playing the guitar. Is it ever possible to fully separate the two? To which end do you lean more closely?
- Zink realizes the way in which his cultural presuppositions influenced his work with Mkuseli. What suppositions do we bring with us in our work? How might they influence our interactions with people we encounter?
- Zink has to come to terms with the reality of the school the high school students attend. What difficult realities might we encounter in our mission efforts?
- In working with the high school students, Zink understands how his past work of being present in the community has helped the students trust him. How can we develop similar relationships in our work?
- When is a time when you have realized the help you can provide is small relative to the size of the challenge? How have you dealt with this situation?
- Zink realizes he might need to commit more time to Itipini. What are the benefits of making an extended commitment to a place? How can people who are unable to move to a place for several years still make an extended commitment?

Section 3: Encountering AIDS

Chapters 7 to 10

Overview: This section dwells at length on the challenges posed by HIV/AIDS in the developing world. While not every group may be interested in mission in such a context, the section raises broader questions about the role of the missionary in terms of education and advocacy. The section is an opportunity for the group to think seriously about how they see their role in difficult circumstances and how they can balance their desire to help with a corresponding desire to respect the culture of the people among whom they are working. It is also a chance to ask questions about how to measure success in a situation of overwhelming need. What markers will the group use to know they have achieved their goals?

Summary: This section begins with two stories about people who refused what seemed to be necessary medical care. One woman, an employee of the Itipini Community Project, spilled

boiling water on herself in a cooking accident at home and then refused to stay in the hospital for the necessary care. Another patient, a young father with AIDS, repeatedly refused to begin taking the life-prolonging anti-retroviral drugs, even though it was clear he needed them. In all cases, Zink tried to explain to the patients the need for the medical care even as they continued to refuse him. And in all cases, the patients died. The experiences



Thandeka, at work before her accident

cause Zink to reflect on what it means to help people and what to do when people don't want help. "HIV, TB, and burns killed much faster than we could educate," he writes. "We had done our best to muddle through. The end result of that muddling was that we stood by ineffectually as preventable deaths unfolded before our eyes." (p. 72)

In a country with the most HIV-positive people in the world, these were far from the only HIV-positive patients Zink worked with. In the following chapters he tells the stories of several others. One young woman, Sizeka, patiently tried to work her way through the process to begin anti-retroviral treatment. But her willingness to go through the process came too late. She died before she was able to get the drugs. Reflecting on her death, Zink realizes she had been eligible to begin the ARV process much earlier than she had. Her reluctance to do so had contributed to her death. He also realizes there were many others like her in Itipini and that the situation needs to change.

A major way to do so, he realizes, is in the group of high school students he is working with. They face the same health-related challenges as anyone else and the relationships he was developing with them made it a possible venue. But Zink paused: how to talk about sex with a group of people over whom he had lots of power? Even as he considered this question, he was engaged in extended conversation encouraging a young woman he knew from the clinic to have a test for HIV. Her fear of the results made it seem unlikely she ever would. But around the same time Zink began to have success talking about sex with his English class, she was tested—and tested negative. “Still,” he writes, “it was a sobering thought. After five months of conversation, I had succeeded in getting exactly one person to test for HIV.” (p. 97)



Pakama, on the first day she could walk to the clinic unaided.

The section concludes with a story about a woman named Pakama. Like Sizeka, she was very sick with AIDS. At several points in his work with her, Zink was sure she was going to die. She kept getting caught in a health care bureaucracy that made Zink question whether it was worth it to invest so much energy in her. Eventually, however, thanks in no small part to her fervent desire to live, Pakama regained her strength and was able to care for herself again. Seeing Pakama doing the laundry in front of her shack changed Zink’s perspective entirely on his work in Itipini. “I had helped—saved, even—someone,” he writes. “I had *done* something.” (p. 110)

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- When have you encountered a situation in which you felt your judgments about a situation were right but others refused to follow your lead? How did you handle this situation?
- How does one draw a proper balance between working alongside someone of another culture while also guiding them to the outcome you think is best?
- How do we best learn about the cultural suppositions people bring with them to their decision-making?
- When have you experienced a little success in the face of difficult circumstances? How has that changed your outlook on the situation?
- In encountering other cultures, we can encounter experiences that frighten, discomfit, or otherwise put us off, as Zink did when he went to Sizeka's funeral. How do we respond to these situations?
- What sources of power do we begin to our work of mission? In what ways should we use this power? How can we ensure we are doing so?
- Sometimes the systems we encounter in mission work—like the health care bureaucracy Zink encountered—can stymie whatever good intentions we have. How does this shape our perspective on mission and the efficacy of our efforts?

Section 4: Launching Programs

Chapters 11 and 12

Overview: Many missionaries and mission groups look to launch new programs as an indication of that they have done something. This section raises broad questions about how best to begin programs and just what kind of resources are most needed. The group can talk about the obstacles they might encounter in launching new programs and how to overcome them. The section is also an opportunity for the group to consider how to deal with failure that will necessarily come with their work. Cross-cultural work is difficult and having the resources to deal with challenges that naturally arise is a major asset in mission.

Summary: Emboldened by his experience working with Pakama, Zink turns his focus to adding programs to the work of the Itipini Community Project and looking for new ways to improve the lives of people in Itipini. His major effort is the launch of a new micro-credit program. Zink works with a group of women who submit ideas for business ventures. After a lengthy series of educational meetings, he makes loans to several of the women. When they begin to make a profit, they'll be able to pay Zink back the money and he can re-lend it to others on the list.

The first person in the program is a young woman named Yoliswa, who wants to start a



Yoliswa, with one of her three children

clothes-selling business to help pay for school fees and clothes for her young children. Over the course of many meetings with Zink, she proves her worth as a candidate for the program and immediately has success. She makes her first re-payment on time and is full of enthusiasm to expand her business. “I want to start a big business and sell lots of clothes,” she tells Zink. “I want to support all my children.” (p. 116)

Some of the other early candidates have success as well—though not quite as imagined. A woman who borrowed money to open a small shop in Itipini ends up selling alcohol

instead. Rather than a small store, she has added to the large number of informal bars in the community. But other borrowers are having problems. One, who was HIV-positive, gets quite ill within a few months of beginning the program, in part due to her excessive alcohol consumption. Her payments lapse over time while the focus shifts to improving her health. She recovers strength but the loan payments have lapsed and the business essentially failed. The motivation to make repayments is supposed to be what keeps people working in their businesses. Zink realizes, however, that some borrowers are making repayments from their government grants and not generating new income from their businesses, defeating the purpose of the program.

The different outcomes borrowers are having makes Zink think again about the micro-credit idea. Plenty of people were offering him money to expand the program. “But I didn’t need more money,” he writes. “I needed people—people who could check on borrowers, coach them through setting up a business, and motivate them to get to work.” (p. 128) Money would not solve all his problems, nor the problems of the people in Itipini.

The major failure, however, is Yoliswa, who had begun with such promise. Due to a variety of circumstances in her home life, her business begins to fail. What is more troubling for Zink is the way in which her failure impacts him. He finds he is unable to meet her and does his best to ignore her. “I took Yoliswa’s failure to get her business off the ground as a personal failure,” he writes. “If I had somehow worked harder, helped her prepare differently, or intervened earlier or more often...the results would have been different.” (p. 131) The failure with Yoliswa mars his time in Itipini. Despite success in other areas of his work, Zink realizes it may be time to think about leaving.



Selling chickens from home

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- In what way does money help us in our mission effort? In what ways does it hinder it?

- How would you have reacted when you found that Xoliswa was selling alcohol instead of what she had agreed to? What do you make of Zink's reaction?
- Some obstacles people face are imposed by the society around them. Others, such as a unwillingness to work or alcohol consumption, are more tied to the person themselves. How do we best help people overcome these sorts of obstacles?
- A key lesson of Zink's work with the micro-credit program is that he needs more social—and not financial—resources to help people in Itipini. How does that lesson shape our understanding of mission?
- In shaping our mission efforts, how can we move past giving money and towards addressing the social and human resource needs that Zink identifies?
- What are healthy ways of dealing with failure in life? By what standards can we judge failure?

Section 5: Working with People

Chapters 13 and 14

Overview: Mission is a human process, mediated through fallible human beings. This section is a chance for the group to consider what prejudices and failings they bring that might hinder their effort. It's also an opportunity for the group to assess how they respond when others begin to project on to them their own hopes and desires. Missionaries and mission groups need to think about how to avoid the subtle temptation of displacing God and putting themselves at the center of the action.

Summary: If Zink's sense of success is tempered by his experience with the micro-credit program, it is further reduced by his experience working closely with individual residents of Itipini. Petros is a young man in Itipini who had occasionally helped around the clinic when Zink



Petros

first arrived. But personality differences and cultural barriers meant the two never developed a deep relationship and, soon, Petros moved on to other activities.

His life is a window for Zink into the life of young men in Itipini and the picture is not pleasant. Xhosa culture upholds an ideal masculinity centered on being a rural patriarch with herds of cattle and land under cultivation. But economic changes in South African society in recent decades have put that ideal further out of reach. Instead, the young men find themselves without access to good education, unemployed, and living in growing urban areas like Mthatha. Often, the results are tragic.

Petros was a case in point. He and a group of young men made an application to the micro-credit program for a candle-making business. But they failed to think through the business plan in the way Zink was requiring the women do. When they realized money would not be immediately forthcoming, they quickly lost interest. Not long afterwards, Petros was arrested for

alleged murder of another young man in Itipini. Zink visited him in prison but it was a difficult experience, looking for the right words across a cultural and linguistic divide.

At the beginning of the new school year, several new students joined the after-school English classes. One was Nolizwi, who had recently moved to Itipini to be with an aunt and uncle after her mother became quite sick in their rural village. Nolizwi was an excellent student but she ran into problems. Her aunt and uncle decided they no longer wanted her to live with them. Nolizwi ended up moving out of Itipini to live with a distant relative several miles from school. One day, on her long walk in, she was robbed of all her school supplies. It was clear a solution was needed.

Seeing her situation, Zink tried to do something. With some effort, it was arranged that Nolizwi should live with a relation of one of the pre-school teachers. Zink helped Nolizwi move from the home of the distant relative to the new home. But the new housing situation quickly turned sour. Her new roommates made it impossible for Nolizwi to focus on her studies. Within weeks, Nolizwi had written Zink a lengthy letter saying her enthusiasm for school was fading. “What can I do? Please help me,” she ended her letter. The best thing seemed to be to move back in with the distant relation. Zink picked her up and drove her back. “In a very real way, we were right back where we started.” (p. 153)

The experience causes Zink to reflect on the role he had come to occupy in Itipini: problem solver. People like Nolizwi came to him because they expected him to address the difficult situations he was facing. And he responded as if they had the right assessment. And that, he realizes, “is a sinful temptation. It put me at the center of the action. It made me the pivot point. It set me up as the actor who mattered most.” (p. 155) Rather than being in control, he realizes, he needs to learn to discern God’s action in the midst of his daily life.



Nolizwi, on the first moving day, with all her worldly possessions

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- Sometimes the people we want to help are hard to like. What are good ways to encounter these sorts of people?
- What do you make of how Zink responded to Petros in their initial interactions when Zink first arrived in Itipini? What can we learn from the situation for our mission experience?
- What kind of problems can we solve? What kind can we not?
- What are good ways to respond when people ask us for help? How can we learn our limits in terms of what kind of help we can provide?
- Zink acknowledges that he displaced God from the center of mission. Has that ever happened to you? How do we guard against the subtle temptation to put ourselves at the center of the action?
- How else could Zink have handled the situation with Nolizwi? What would it have meant to discern God's action in that situation?

Section 6: Wrapping Up and Leaving

Chapter 15

Overview: The theological underpinnings of our mission efforts matter, even if they are often largely unvoiced. This section builds on the entire book to lay out a basic theology of mission that can help groups structure their own thinking about mission. People can reflect on what in this section rings true for them, what does not, and what is left out. The section is also a chance to think about endings. No mission project or relationship is forever and conclusions are just as important, if not more so, than beginnings. The sooner the mission group begins thinking about its eventual end, the stronger a position it will find itself in.

Summary: Coming to the end of two years in Itipini, Zink realizes that he has become enmeshed in the life of the community. After the unexpected death of the husband of a staff member, Zink fully participates in the funeral and offers a short eulogy in Xhosa. Even as he does so, however, he realizes his time is coming to an end. He starts thinking about how best to end his time. He seeks out Yoliswa, who had once seemed so promising with her clothes business, to learn what has become of her. She is surviving on government grants and the help of friends but her dream of a successful clothes business has long since passed. He takes delight in Pakama's improved health. She is now active around the community on a daily basis and he greets her as a friend, not as a person in need of daily attention. His early intentions to "save" the people he encountered are a distant memory. Now, he simply tries to be a member of the community.



With Simnikiwe at Bafo's funeral

That task, however, is deceptively difficult. Whereas once he put his focus on his being, his knowledge of the language and culture have advanced so far he is now much more capable. Even as the list of things he can do expands, however, his presence begins to suffer. "My temper was too short. I snapped at patients who cut in line.... Sometimes, I was unpleasant to be

around.” (p. 162) Simply being a member of the community was not an option. People were looking to him for help and advice and he found he could no longer bear the burden. Was this what burnout looked like? Zink recoiled from the idea but it had, perhaps, a grain of truth.

The ending of his time in Itipini provides an opportunity to reflect on what mission means to Zink. Mission is a journey, headed in the direction of the peace and wholeness embodied in the Hebrew word *shalom*. It was a journey for Zink that began with his decision to be incarnate in Itipini and build relationships with people there. It was only from that point that he was able to move towards the reconciliation that is at the core of mission. Zink’s missionary task was to accompany the people of Itipini on their journey, seeking to push and prod that journey in the direction of *shalom*, learning from them as he did so. Complete *shalom* is out of our reach in this life. But it is the willingness to set out on that journey that makes a Christian missional. As he left Itipini, Zink realized, his journey had been shaped at least as much as he had shaped anyone else’s.

Questions for Conversation and Reflection

- How do we deal with frustrations we may encounter as missionaries? What are healthy ways of doing so? What are unhealthy ways?
- No matter how hard we try to persuade them otherwise, people may look to us for help and advice. How do we best encounter these situations?
- When is a time that you have felt “burned out” on helping others? What are strategies for avoiding this?
- What is the importance of the Incarnation to mission? How can we apply these lessons to our own mission efforts?
- If mission is a journey, in which direction is this group’s journey headed? Who have been important shapers of our journey to this point? Who will shape our journey going forward?
- What in Zink’s theology of mission rings true for you? What does not? What has he left out?
- Zink argues that while his work may not have seemed much different to what a Peace Corps volunteer does, all development work needs to be done with reference to a “Creator God, who lovingly created each person with a divine purpose” (p. 168). What do you make of this

argument? How do we help people understand that their inner talents are the most important in their journey towards *shalom*?

- What is the importance of thinking in theological terms about our work? Is there any importance?

Where are they now?

The period documented in this book stretches from 2007 to 2009. In the years since, Jesse Zink has graduated from seminary, been ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church, and started a doctorate in world Christianity. In that time, he has stayed in touch with people in Itipini and made a return visit in 2011.



With Pakama in 2011

Pakama, the woman who came back from the brink of death in chapter 10, had almost doubled her weight in the years since Zink left. She had started a small fruit stand in town to help pay her daughter's school fees. She was more than capable of walking back and forth in front of her shack. She walks the mile and a half to her stand and back every day.

Yoliswa, who was the first borrower in the micro-credit program, had moved back to Mthatha from the village on the outskirts of town where she had been staying. She had a job as a cleaning woman and was managing to pay rent to live with her children in a home not far from where Vuyelwa, the young woman who had tested for HIV after so many conversations, was living. Vuyelwa had stayed consistent with her HIV tests, had not had another child, and was earning money as a hair stylist.

Nolizwi, the young woman in chapter 14 who had so many struggles in school, finished the school year in Mthatha and then moved back to her rural village. Her mother's health was better and it seemed a safer place to live, not too far from the rural high school. She was as smiling as ever, passing her classes in school, and hoping to finish her high school degree in another year.

Mkuseli continued his work as after-school director. His wife was part-way through a program in social work, hoping to generate a



Nolizwi (center) with school friends in rural village

second income for the family. Petros has been released from prison—without a trial; the case had collapsed—but was nowhere to be found in the weeks Zink spent in Mthatha. Two of the young women whom Zink had coached in his after-school English classes had graduated from high school. Several were still trying. A few had dropped out, had a child, or otherwise decided that school was not for them.

In May 2012, the Mthatha municipal government made the decision to bulldoze Itipini, in a move that showed the true extent of Itipini’s “informal” relationship with the city government. The decision followed several months of conflict between some members of Itipini and a nearby township, known as Waterfall. Waterfall residents said Itipini was being used as a base by young men to rob and steal from homes in Waterfall. Although the conflict was serious, the move to demolish the community was sudden and surprising and left the entire community homeless.



Itipini in 2007 (left) and 2012 (right)

Residents were moved to temporary accommodations, which were not large enough for the hundreds of people who chose to live in them. (Many others sought out shelter with friends and family elsewhere in Mthatha and in the region.) At the time of this writing, residents were still living in such accommodations and waiting for long-promised permanent housing on a far edge of town. The destruction of Itipini is a reminder of the impermanence and “informal” nature of such communities. It’s also a reminder that people on the margins of society are in consistent need of advocates and allies who ensure their voices are heard and their interests consulted as societies make decisions about their future.

Jenny McConnachie, meanwhile, continues to live in Mthatha as she has for more than three decades and continues to work with and advocate for the people of Itipini in their new circumstances.

More Information

The Young Adult Service Corps is an active and growing program for young people in The Episcopal Church. More information can be found online (<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/yasc>) or by contacting David Copley, the Mission Personnel Officer, at dcopley@episcopalchurch.org. Virtually every other mainline Protestant denomination has a similar program for young people. More information about such programs are best found by searching the denomination's web site.

There is an equally active program for young people who are interested in mission in a domestic context. Episcopal Service Corps (<http://www.episcopalservicecorps.org/>) places young adults in community-based service positions in a wide array of urban and rural contexts around the country. Again, similar programs exist in virtually every other mainline Protestant denomination.

Many denominations, including the Episcopal Church, also send people of an older generation overseas for extended commitments. In the Episcopal context, more information can be obtained by contacting David Copley or reading the information on the Church's web site.

Missionaries often return to the United States for periods of time on furlough and are always interested in speaking about their mission experiences. There can be no better way to introduce a congregation to the wonder and challenges of mission than by inviting missionaries to speak. This can include not only those who have served overseas but people who work in domestic mission contexts as well. Many Episcopal dioceses have companion relationships with churches around the world. Inviting guests from the companion diocese to speak in a church is also an excellent way to stir up interest in global mission and the church around the world.

Ordering Information

Grace at the Garbage Dump can be ordered at your local bookstore, online, or downloaded to your e-reader device. If ordering at your local bookstore, it often helps to know the publisher (Wipf & Stock) and ISBN number (978-1-61097-613-8).

Discounts on *Grace at the Garbage Dump* are available for bulk orders. The publisher would be happy to talk to you about this. Contact them directly, either at (541) 344-1528 or orders@wipfandstock.com. More information is also online at www.wipfandstock.com.