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Sawubona



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Sawubona, "I see you." Ngikhona, "I am here."

The All Hands In, Sanctuary by the Sea annual retreat has adopted an old African way of greeting, and has transformed it into their own, with God's grace. It has become "I see you, I hear you, I welcome you, I honor you."

Twenty women from all walks of life, from various cities and towns on the Northeast, gathered the weekend of September 14 for the annual women's retreat by the ocean. This was the fifth year of such a gathering. Five years ago, three women survivors of sex trafficking were the first ones to participate. By this year, God had multiplied our numbers, and trafficking survivors and anti-trafficking advocates alike gathered together in the oasis by the sea. God is clearly doing something and telling all of us involved with All Hands In to give proper greeting, welcome and accompaniment to his special daughters. We greet, we hug, we cry, we laugh, we clasp hands, we sing, we stomp our feet, but most importantly we learn about women of the Bible who have gone before us and respond "Nigkhoma." The cloud of witnesses let all of us know during that weekend that they are present.

It has been a humble privilege to minister and co-lead the Sanctuary by the Sea retreat from its inception. I have taught about seven biblical women thus far. We have learned about a few unnamed women (like the woman at the well) and also about Orpah, Mary Magdalene and Ruth. This special ministry has its roots in Massachusetts but is linked internationally through a few mentors who speak against human trafficking and/or support ministries who reach women who have escaped sex trafficking .

Barbara Anderson, president of All Hands In, shares these reflections:

The Sanctuary By the Sea retreat is funded by a grant and donations. Women's groups donate beddings, towels and toiletries to let the women know they are loved and welcomed. *Love* is international. It has no boundaries. The women we serve through All Hands In want to be loved, respected and feel safe. They want healing—physically, mentally and spiritually. That's what we offer through Sanctuary By the Sea "God's love through a safe space, building relationships and caring.

Over the years, we have had the opportunity to reflect on our brokenness. God has sent the ones who most needed these retreats, and they have been welcomed with the special greeting of Sawubona.

I encourage the faith community to get involved and support trafficked and exploited women in their own community and around the world. Shine your light into the darkness revealing God's hope and love to those who are looking for the light."



For more information about All Hands In, please contact Barbara Anderson at info@allhandsinma.org.

For more information about Short-Term Mission through International Ministries, please contact volunteers@internationalministries.org.