



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## **150 People, 40 Religious Institutions, Trained By Top Defense Experts at Historic Event**

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Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) hosted a historic event at Calvary Baptist Church in Jamaica on Thursday where top defense experts trained the faith-based community on how they could protect themselves from an act of violence like the Charleston, South Carolina church shooting that left nine people dead.

In 2014, there were 176 violent incidents in houses of worship – 74 of which were deadly. The Charleston case was at least the 91st violent attack on a black church since 1956.

“There needs to be a paradigm shift and there will be a certain amount of tension and fear that goes along with that,” Senator Sanders said. “It’s a new world. Who could believe this stuff? Five years ago, if I told you this, you wouldn’t have believed it. There was a time when people wouldn’t do anything bad in front of the church – a man would put out his cigarette before he walked passed the church. Folk wouldn’t drink in front of the church. The old ways have changed and now it seems like people enjoy doing those things. We need to take back our streets. We need to take back our children. We need to take back ourselves.”

At the defense training, representatives from the NYPD, Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as well as an Israeli defense expert gave presentations, which included displaying the types of weapons commonly used in shootings and bombings, how to escape / seek cover from an attack, profiling and instructions on how to apply for government grants to implement security measures.

Some 150 people from 40 different churches, masjids and faith-based organizations attended. The purpose of the event was to educate, prepare and organize the faith-based community. All of the weapons used in the event’s demonstrations were unloaded / non-functioning.

### **In case of an active shooter attack, a three-step method was highlighted.**

- **Run** – If you can get out, do so. Always try to escape or evacuate even if others insist on staying behind. Getting out of harm’s way is the top priority. Call 911 when you are safe.
- **Hide** – If you can’t get out, find a place to hide. Be quick and quiet. Secure your hiding place the best way you can. Turn off the lights, lock the doors, and turn off

the ringer on your cell phone. If you can't find a safe room or closet, try to hide behind large objects.

- **Fight** – As a **LAST** resort and **ONLY** if your **life is in danger**, fight back with aggression. Use improvised weapons to disarm the shooter. Commit to taking the shooter down, no matter what.

### **Recommended safety measures for houses of worship included:**

- **Emergency Plan** – Have one ready and practice it many times.
- **Safe Rooms** - Places with a door that can be locked and people can hide from danger.
- **Install a Panic Button** – A button that is hidden and can be pressed to summon help when you are unable to call 911.
- **Deter, Defend, Detect** – Have a security expert train a group of volunteers at your house of worship and then place them in areas where they will be able to deter violence, defend others when necessary, and detect suspicious activity.

Senator Sanders' safety training event was endorsed by: National Baptist Convention of America Inc., First Episcopal District of AME, Greater Allen AME, National Council of Churches, NYS Council of Churches, Queens Federation of Churches and Southern Poverty Law Center.