



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Faith-Based Community Talks Trump at Sanders' Clergy Breakfast

JAMES SANDERS JR. December 16, 2016



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) today held his monthly Community Clergy Breakfast at Christ Pentecostal Temple in Jamaica, where the topic of discussion was how the new Trump presidential administration will impact the faith-based community, including how religious leaders and their congregations can cope with potential problems and move forward.

“Whether Trump is the best thing the world has ever seen or the worst thing that the world should never see, be prepared,” Sanders said. “But you should also take a person at their word. You have to listen to what a person says, but you can’t judge them solely on words. You

also have to look at what they do. What are the fruits? The fruits so far of President-elect Trump have been bad.”

The guest speakers at the breakfast were the Rev. N.J. L'Heureux Jr., Executive Director of the Queens Federation of Churches, Professor Matt Meyer of the International Peace Research Association and Inter-faith Prisoners of Conscience Project and Pastor Darryl James of Grace Episcopal Church.

L'Heureux said that people should not become overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty in light of Trump being elected as Commander-in-Chief, but rather see it as an opportunity to unify and work together in order create a greater understanding of who we are as people and how we are all fit together as members of God's family. He noted that fear debilitates and paralyzes people and added, quoting Bible scripture, “Fear not. Be not afraid, God is with you. Do not fear.”

L'Heureux said he didn't have any great fear for the long-term future of the nation, noting the strength of the constitution and the machinations of government which don't move quickly, adding that Trump may find great difficulty in carrying out some of his controversial proposals. L'Heureux also spoke about the rise in hate crimes since the Trump election and said the president-elect is not the cause of racism, sexism, and xenophobia, but rather has exacerbated, through his rhetoric, what already existed.

Meyer echoed some of L'Heureux 's sentiments adding that “Our fears do not do a good job of predicting the future.” He called upon people to organize and engage in conversations with others who have differing opinions, because that creates a true path to unity. “We have look at unity that goes beyond the people we agree with the most,” Meyer said.

When it comes to the basic evils of materialism, militarism and racism, Trump cannot be blamed as the cause, because the roots go much deeper than that, Meyer said, however he may be a perfect rallying point for people to recognize that these are not issues of the past. Meyer added that Trump represents right wing populism, which cannot be effectively defeated by elite liberalism.

“It is time that we look back at the roots of peoples’ movements like the movements led by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and rebuild those movements in our time,” Meyer said. “I think we have seen the seeds of those movements in the past year, and years.”

The Rev. Darryl James, Pastor of Grace Episcopal Church, spoke about building bridges with youth and teaching them about their history. He also encouraged the clergy to become change agents in the lives of the community. “Sometimes we have to step out of our comfort zone to do the things that God has called us to do to make a difference in our community,” he said.