



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR  
James Sanders Jr.

## Women in Ministry, Domestic Violence, Lead Discussion at Community Clergy Breakfast

JAMES SANDERS JR. March 18, 2016



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) held a specially themed Community Clergy Breakfast today in recognition of Women's History Month where the topics of discussion were domestic violence and women in ministry. The event was held at Bethel Gospel Tabernacle Church in Jamaica.

"It is important to support women because they are the backbone of our community and our culture," Sanders said. "I understand that women hold up half the sky, and that the reason

the sky hasn't fallen is because of the strength of women."

This month's keynote speaker was the Rev. Dr. Ernestine Sanders, pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church and Executive Vice President of Clergy United for Community Empowerment (CUCE), who gave a moving speech describing how she used her strength, intelligence and faith in God to become a leader in ministry at a time when most churches and faith-based organizations were headed by men.

"I am a minister of the gospel 24/7," Rev. Sanders said. "What I say on Sunday, I say on Monday, on Tuesday, and late Saturday night. My ministry does not start when I walk into the church building. I'm not phony, but if you can't laugh, you can't enjoy life. I think we would have more people converted to Christ, if that's what you're trying to do, if you're light about it, instead of being so heavy when you reach them, or so deep that they can't find you."

Rev. Sanders advised women not to compete against each other but to work together as a team along with their male counterparts. She also warned that there might be limitations as they try to advance in the church, and added that they should not discount the value of men.

"We don't need to be in competition with the male, we grow together," Rev. Sanders said.

"Don't get so wrapped up in the women's movement that you think you don't need men. You don't have to bash the male to be somebody.

Rev. Sanders also encouraged attendees to network and cross denominational lines.

"I believe in empowering women to reach their God-given potential," Rev. Sanders said. "I believe that women can do anything that their ability allows them to do."

Tina Burke, also of CUCE, gave a presentation on domestic violence. The organization offers an intervention program for victims and batterers, treating every client with dignity and respect, and operating with the mission that all individuals deserve to live in a world free from violence and that a safe home constitutes a safe family and that a safe family creates a safer society.

Women ages 20-24 are at the greatest risk of becoming victims of domestic violence and more than 4 million women experience physical assault and rape by their partners, according to CUCE. Domestic violence costs around \$47 billion a year in law enforcement involvement, legal work, medical and mental health treatment, and loss of productivity, Burke said.

"There are some signs of domestic violence before it actually happens," Burke explained. "A partner may accuse you of cheating or being disloyal and make you feel worthless. A lot of times a domestic violence victim's wounds may heal, but the words that are said to you can have a long-term psychological impact."

Senator Sanders' Community Clergy Breakfasts are held monthly with a new topic each time, but always aimed at educating clergy and giving them the tools and information they need to help themselves and their congregations.

We would like to thank Pa-Nash Restaurant and Lounge for sponsoring the breakfast, and Bethel Gospel Tabernacle Church for allowing us to use their space.