



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Senator Sanders Hosts Anti-Terror Attack & Mass Shooting Survival Training for Clergy

JAMES SANDERS JR. December 20, 2018



In light of recent incidents of mass shootings and acts of terror aimed at houses of worship, State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) hosted a special safety training session for clergy on December 19, 2018 at Greater Rescue Church of Christ in Jamaica.

Top defense experts from the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Service, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Federal Bureau of

Investigations (FBI), and NYPD Shield, educated the many faith-based leaders in attendance on how to protect themselves and their congregations in an active shooter situation.

“Hopefully, this never happens to you, but if it does, you better have a plan,” Sanders said.

“Most people don’t live because they are not prepared to live. They don’t think about it, and therefore they don’t know what to do.”

Sanders added, “Committed people who are serious, especially if they are trained, can absolutely take an attacker down. This information that we are bringing to you is not meant to scare you, but to do the opposite – to allow us to live. We live in an America that is awash with guns. There are more guns than people, and yet with all these guns, we feel less and less safe.”

Roger Parrino, Commissioner of the NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Service, highlighted a three-step method for how to handle an active shooter attack - Run, Hide, Fight. If you can get out, do so. If you can’t get out, find a place to hide. As a last resort, attack the shooter with aggression. Use improvised weapons and attempt to disarm him.

Police Officer Mike Wallach of NYPD’s Counterterrorism Division SHIELD Unit, described a similar set of survival steps - Avoid, Barricade, Confront. Stay away from stairwells and exterior doors. Seek shelter. Lock and blockade the door. If there is no other option, act quickly, aggressively and collectively to confront and attack the shooter.

Wallach also noted that active shooter events can occur anywhere. They usually last between 7 and 11 minutes and in 97 percent of cases the perpetrators are male. Wallach explained that the overall way to prevent such a situation from occurring in the first place is to become a hard target through vigilance, situational awareness and other security measures.

Special Agent Paul Greenfield from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives spoke about the different types of weapons that could be used by an active shooter including a rifle or handgun. He explained that there are opportune times when a shooter can be disabled such as when he is re-loading or if the gun jams.

Greenfield also noted the difference between cover and concealment. The former aims to stop the bullet, while the latter aims to hide the potential victim. For example, standing behind a thick cement column may provide good cover, however if its not wide enough, the victim may still be visible to the shooter, and therefore is poor concealment.

Supervisory Special Agent Chris Donohue of the FBI spoke about hate crimes and how they differ from hate speech and how to report and prevent such incidents. He recommended that faith leaders have a good relationship with their local police officers and precincts and to speak with them often. He added that preventative measures may include the installation of security camera, strategically placing ushers at the house of worship, locking the doors after the religious service has started, and most importantly having an emergency plan that is shared and practiced with congregants.

We would like to thank our sponsor, MJ Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C. and our community partners Baisely Pond Park Block Association and 147th Road Community Association. We would also like to thank Greater Rescue Church of Christ for allowing us to use their space to host the event.