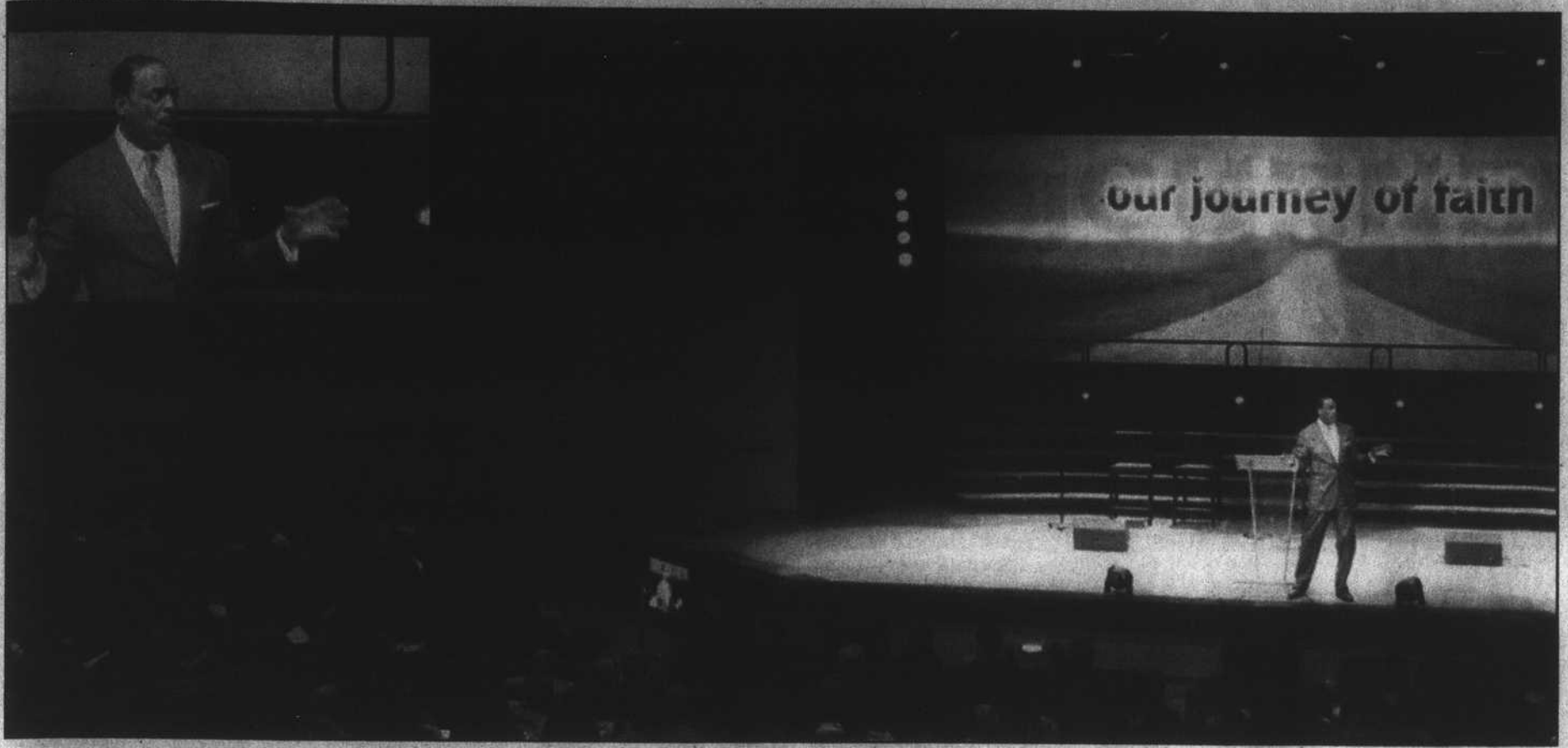


'Break the huddle and run the play,' preacher, CBS Sports' Brown says



Minister James Brown addresses the congregation at Bridgeway Community Church near Baltimore, Maryland.

Photo by Timothy Cox

BY TIMOTHY COX
SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

COLUMBIA, Md. — Mention the name James Brown, and worldwide, most people think of the hard-working legendary, now-deceased musician.

However, in broadcast media circles, the same name belongs to another hard-working black man with the exact same handle.

On a recent Sunday morning at Bridgeway Community Center in suburban Baltimore, broadcaster James Brown was in a role many people didn't realize he was into — a minister's role. As special guest speaker, Brown provided the word during a month-long speakers series hosted by Bridgeway's resident pastor, David Anderson.

During his hour-long sermon, Minister

Brown delivered a passionate message reflecting his lifelong commitment to sports and spirituality. Having experienced life as a teenage high school and college basketball star, Minister Brown would later use his court savvy to transition to a career as a network TV football announcer and analyst.

His recent sermon targeted the theme: "Break the huddle and run the play." The football analogy fit perfectly, considering Brown currently hosts "Inside the NFL" on Showtime, in addition to his regularly scheduled play-by-play football broadcasts that have aired on CBS-TV and FOX-TV in the past 30 years. He also hosts CBS News and contributes to "60 Minutes."

Blessed with a smooth, engaging personality, the announcer/minister easily encountered the congregation, initially

with stories about his wife, and four young grandchildren. Following his warmup of his audience, Brown evoked his love for the Lord — and his knowledge of Scripture.

During his sermon, he compared football huddles with attending church services, Sunday school and Bible studies — but never taking lessons learned in those forums and "running the play" or applying what's learned for good use. He also equated four quarters of football with the biblical three-scores and 10 life-cycle.

"By age 16, you've completed quarter one, at 36, it's halftime; at 50, it's third quarter, and anything after 70, well, that's over-time and ultimately, 'sudden death,' he said to applause and chuckles.

After enjoying a star-studded career at DC's legendary DeMatha Catholic High School, Brown matriculated to Harvard, where he earned a degree in American

Government, in addition to his continued athletic prowess as Harvard's premier hoopster. When a tryout with the NBA Atlanta Hawks proved fruitless, Brown gathered his Harvard degree and entered corporate America with gigs at Xerox and Eastman Kodak.

Brown regularly attends D.C.'s Rhema Christian Center, and speaks there on occasion. Bridgeway Community Church was founded by senior pastor David Anderson. The church reflects a spirit-filled, multi-culturally diverse congregation.

Dr. Anderson described Minister Brown as "a devout man of God."

For more information about Bridgeway Community Church, go to, info@bridgeway.cc.

New

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ence thus far and I have enjoyed working with my officers and meeting my members."

As a young man, Baldwin says he acknowledged that "God has something for me to do" but was not quite sure what that was at the time. He says he finally gave in to the call in his early 20s but did

not immediately go into preaching.

"I was actually in my early 30s when I got my official call," he said. "When I say official, I mean by my conference and then going to seminary school."

Baldwin has ministries and issues that are close to his heart. Children, health care, food insecurities, community service and social justice are just a few of the things on his list.

"But I think the quality of lifestyle is what I am really interested in helping church members with, but also members of the surrounding community," he said.

Another goal for Baldwin is to integrate himself with some of the local pastors in the area as well. He says he has met a few of the local pastors who have come to introduce him to the area.

Baldwin said many

people have certain misconceptions about the Seventh-day Adventist faith. He acknowledged there are differences, such as the belief in the eternal soul or the day they observe the Sabbath.

"We are not a separate religious entity; we are Protestant," he said. "People get us mixed up sometimes with JW's (Jehovah Witnesses) or with Mormons. There is a distinct difference between a

Seventh-day Adventist, a JW or a Mormon."

"The Seventh-day Adventist probably has more in common with the Baptist and the Methodist than they ever would with JW or Mormon, because we believe in the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit," he continued. "We believe that Jesus died and rose for us."

Ephesus has had a long tradition of bringing information to the community

about important issues that plague the community, such as dementia or how to work with youth. Baldwin says he wants to continue to attack those issues and more going forward.

"I think the church needs to speak on the issues," he continued. "I am not necessarily shy about including these issues in my sermons from time to time as well. The church cannot be divorced from the struggle."



Submitted photos

The Love Church is located at 4198 Cherry St. in Winston-Salem.



In seven years, The Love Church has grown to one of the best churches that attracts the millennial generation.

Growth

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you know until they know how much you care," he said. "We do things for the community such as \$5,000 gas card giveaways. We went to the grocery store and bought everyone groceries, and we do funerals for free."

Friday says he knows for sure one funeral he performed for free was a catalyst for a lot of their growth. He says once he spoke to the young people at the funeral, many individuals flocked to the church.

Friday has somewhat of an unconventional path to the ministry. He says he

was a troubled youth that had run-ins with law enforcement, which led him to prison. While there, he found his faith.

"I am very open about my story," he said. "I was in the streets really bad, and so I got locked up. My attraction to the ministry was when I was locked up. There I started teaching Bible study and when I got out, I was connected to Holy Trinity Full Gospel Baptist Church and Rev. Richard C. Miller, and I just served wherever I could."

"Preaching was the last thing I've done because when I was ordained to be a minister, it was a lot of us and you didn't get the

opportunity to preach," he continued. "I may have had the chance to preach for 15 minutes or so on a Wednesday but he [Miller] taught me a lot, and that is how I learned to do ministry."

Once he got out of prison, Friday says he was determined to stick to the church. He says he would ride the bus to church until someone blessed him with a car. He met his wife at Holy Trinity and said they did not initially set out to start a church but after visiting other churches, they felt they needed to do something different.

"I'll say it like this because I don't like saying we are better, it's just our

assignment is so different," Friday said about The Love Church. "Our assignment is social service because we are doing what God says and to touch the people nobody would touch."

Friday says the things

he went through and experienced as a youth helps him relate more to this generation. He feels when he shares the things he did in the past with young people they can use him as an example of what not to do.

Friday says the faith

community has to use new methods to create avenues for people to come in. He faithfully uses social media to attract new members. Even his preaching style differs from other Baptist preachers, which is also a bonus.

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Guest Minister:
Rev. Monica Redmond
St. Paul Baptist Church,
Charlotte NC

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