

TRANSCRIPT
ONOMATOPEIA

EP 2 – Pastor Mike: The man behind the pulpit at the
First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem

Sound of Pastor Mike's office

MARTA CAMPABADAL: It's Sunday. And Michael Walrond Junior, is getting ready for his worship service. He is not dressed in the style you expect of a pastor. He is wearing black-rimmed glasses, a pullover, stretch green khaki pants, and sneakers. He is ready for the show. Ready to be Pastor Mike.

Theme music

I'm Marta Campabadal Graus and this is Onomatopoeia- a podcast about the places and people of New York City. In this episode, Pastor Mike. The man behind the pulpit at the First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem.

Theme music fades out

Gospel music for the church

MC: Pastor Mike is like a rock star.

[TAPE \[Preaching PASTOR MIKE\]: "God says, I am not impressed by your rituals, I am not impressed by your ceremonies, I am not impressed by your fundraising skills."](#)

MC: But a religious one.

[TAPE \[Preaching PASTOR MIKE\]: "I'm not impressed by your slogans and your chance, I am not impressed by your music and your offerings, your sacrifices, they mean nothing."](#)

MC: Pastor Mike is known for his passionate sermons.

[TAPE \[Preaching PASTOR MIKE\]: "Say you know what I want: justice, oceans of it. What does that mean?"](#)

MC: His decision to become a pastor was as dramatic as his sermons - he recalls what led him to this career as if it had happened yesterday.

TAPE [Voice PASTOR MIKE]: “It was 1989. I was in college. It was very traumatic and involved a lot of crying and a lot of silence. And I remember I was in the shower. And I felt the water felt heavy. I thought I was having a nervous breakdown. It was very strange. I thought I was losing my mind.”

MC: Pastor Mike ran into his room crying. his roommate called their advisor. When Pastor Mike stopped crying he told them what happened.

TAPE [Voice PASTOR MIKE]: “I am going to be a preacher. That’s all I could say. Nobody in my family had been doing this, just no one. I just knew I was supposed to do it. That was at eighteen and since then I have just been preparing myself to do this.”

MC: From then on Pastor Mike never looked back.

TAPE [Voice PASTOR MIKE]: “I love being around people. But most of all, when I teach, when I preach, I love. I love the fact that something I said or did contributes to helping another human being the most.”

MC: And people love him, too. His community treats him the way fans would react to their favorite musician.

TAPE [Voice LAWRENCE HINES]: “If it wasn’t for Pastor Michael today, I would probably be dead.”

MC: That’s Lawrence Hines. He is part of the media team at the church. He has dealt with depression, suicide attempts, and PTSD all his life.

TAPE [Voice LAWRENCE HINES]: “Pastor Mike's, you know, teaching and just opening my mind and, you know, my understanding about relationship with God, and what it means to be a part of a church.”

MC: Pastor Mike’s reach has extended into the community at large. He created a mental health center that offers free services, the church also offers assessment of

entrepreneurial projects. He also opened a school for adults who want to keep learning. He organizes a coat giveaway in the winter, a weekly food pantry, and provides Christmas and Thanksgiving meals.

Even outgoing Mayor Bill de Blasio is a fan.

[TAPE \[Voice BILL DE BLASIO\]: If you would only give me two or three or four hours. I can tell you how great Pastor Mike is.](#)

Applause

MC: He was at Pastor Mike's service one day in November.

[TAPE \[Voice BILL DE BLASIO\]: "There are extraordinary faith leaders all over the city, the greatest city in the country, the greatest city in the world. But I knew there was one who could move this city forward like no other. And there was one man who had the stature and the ability and the heart to lead them all: Pastor Mike Walrond."](#)

MC: It's easy to see that Pastor Mike has a real passion for what he does. When he speaks, it seems like he is speaking to God. His intense look. The excitement in his voice. And the power of his moving hands.

[TAPE \[Preaching from Pastor Mike\]: "Thank you for the privilege of breathing today, thank you for the gift of life today oh god."](#)

MC: But there is something few people know about him.

[TAPE \[Voice PASTOR MIKE\]: "I'm extremely shy. And people think that's so strange because of what I do. But there's a big difference between me, what I feel, and when I stand to appreciate something else is going on."](#)

MC: Pastor Mike's son Tre has also found his calling at the church.

[TAPE \[Voice MICHAEL WALROND THE III\]: "He inspired me just to be my authentic self within my work."](#)

MC: He's 30 years old. and the Youth and Young Adults Pastor at the First Corinthian Baptist Church in Harlem.

[TAPE \[Voice MICHAEL WALROND THE III\]: “He told me very early on, you know, if you want to do this if you are serious about following God’s call, you know God’s calling you to be you, not, not to be him or anybody else, but just to walk in my own shoes and just to be authentic and do everything to the person that I am, so that’s been a great influence and it’s really helped me just to create my own path as I continue to do this job.”](#)

MC: Pastor Mike says that what he does is bigger than him. His job has become his way of making an impact in the world, but most importantly, in the Harlem community.

[TAPE \[Preaching PASTOR MIKE\]: “Well done. You took what I gave you and you made the world different. Well done. You’ve takek your gifts and you have lifted humanity. Well done. You’ve taken your abilities and changed the world.”](#)

Theme music

MC: This episode of Onomatopoeia was created by me, Marta Campabadal. Onomatopoeia is a production of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism. Joanne Faryon is our executive producer and professor. Original theme music by Lee Feldman. Our graphic was created by Sunni Bean. Special thanks to Columbia Digital Librarian Michelle Wilson.

Theme music fades out