

Rev. R. Janae Pitts-Murdock

### **Description:**

In this episode of *Ministry Pivot*, host Rev. Russ sits down with Rev. R. Janae Pitts-Murdock, Senior Pastor at Light of the World Christian Church in Indianapolis, for an insightful conversation about pastoral succession, leadership and her journey as the first woman to lead her historic congregation. Pastor Pitts-Murdock shares her experience transitioning from an interim to a senior pastor role, discusses the challenges of succeeding a legacy pastor, and reflects on leading through uncharted territory during the pandemic.

### **Takeaways**:

* Value of Interim Leadership: Pastor Pitts-Murdock emphasized the importance of interim pastors in giving congregations time to heal, recalibrate, and prepare for a permanent leader, ensuring a smooth pastoral transition.
* Balancing Legacy and New Leadership: She explained how crucial it is to honor the legacy of a long-serving pastor while setting clear boundaries to establish her own leadership style and vision.
* Importance of Self-Awareness: Leaders must know their strengths and weaknesses and maintain a clear sense of identity when stepping into a new role, particularly when following a legacy pastor.
* Navigating Gender Bias: As the first female pastor in her church’s 157-year history, Pastor Pitts-Murdock discussed the challenges of sexism and the need to assert her leadership despite societal expectations and biases.

### **Other Key Points Suggested by Rev. Russell St. Bernard**

* Faithful Leadership During Crisis: She shared how her faith and reliance on God carried her through leading her congregation during the COVID-19 pandemic when adaptability and resilience were essential.
* Strategic Fundraising: Pastor Pitts-Murdock highlighted how stepping out in faith and trusting God’s provision enabled her to successfully raise more funds than anticipated for a major project, even without external partnerships.
* Intentional Succession Planning: Her approach to succession, including clear boundaries and transparency, helped the congregation trust the process, ensuring the next pastor could step into a healthy environment.

### **Connect with the Guest: Rev. R. Janae Pitts-Murdock:**

* Love of the World - Christian Church Website: <https://www.lovelwcc.org/>
* Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lovelwcc>
* Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/LoveLWCC>

### **Resources**

* 5 Minute Pivot and Other Podcast by Rev. Russell St.Bernard <https://ministrypivot.com/conversations/>
* Articles from Rev. Russell St. Bernard: <https://ministrypivot.com/articles/>

### **Final Takeaway:**

* Role of Strong Mentorship: She discussed how having strong mentors, particularly male mentors, shaped her leadership but acknowledged the need for more women-specific mentorship in ministry.
* Using Multiple Skillsets: With her three master's degrees in public policy, divinity, and business administration, Pastor Pitts-Murdock demonstrated the importance of leveraging diverse skills to navigate both spiritual and operational challenges in church leadership.
* Trusting God’s Timing: Throughout her journey, Pastor Pitts-Murdock emphasized the importance of trusting in God’s timing and guidance, especially in moments of uncertainty or when facing unexpected challenges.

**Discussion Questions: (discuss with your team or reflect on your own?)**

* How can we honor the legacy of past leaders while also making room for new leadership and growth in our ministry or organization?
* What strategies can we implement to ensure that leadership transitions are smooth and transparent and foster trust within the congregation or team?
* How can we better support women in leadership roles within our church or organization, particularly in overcoming biases and expectations?

# Podcast Resources

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