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article: Andrea Riggs | photos: David L. Holmon

# PASTORS' FITNESS CHALLENGE



## 3 Pastors. 30 Days. The results are in!

### MORE THAN RESULTS

It was more than a chance to lose weight, work with skilled trainers or a prize-winning race to the finish. It was a fierce competition among three area leaders, driven by commitments to make positive lifestyle changes. Their fitness backgrounds varied, from over 30 years of running experience to little structured activity since high school. The pastors in the challenge shared two common goals: (1) To improve their personal fitness level, and (2) to inspire their congregations and other local churches to improve their health.

### 30 DAYS

A lot can happen in 30 days. The combined weight loss was 36 lbs, 6.2 inches, and 10.9% body fat – these *Today in Church* pastors were on the move!

### PERSONAL TRAINING PUSH

Each pastor underwent intense 60 minute training sessions. The trainers (Andrea, Bethany and Maurice) worked every major muscle group in between cardio bouts. Their goal was to give personal attention and a total body workout, increasing strength, conditioning, and flexibility. Pastor Griffin noted, “The thing that I enjoyed most was the encouragement. Each trainer was patient, competent, and pleasant to work with.”

Pastor Portis added, “The biggest change for me was intensity. They gave me the push to take my fitness to a new level.”

### NUTRITION

Nutrition was the most important aspect of the challenge. Pastor Griffin confirmed, “Changing my eating habits were very difficult.” It set the foundation for their success and involved major eating changes. Pastor Collins recalls, “Not eating fried foods was a major challenge. I now limit fried foods and soda intake and eat by 8 p.m.” The nutrition requirements included keeping a weekly intake log and following the food rules.

The food rules: (1) Eat breakfast daily. (2) Have no fried foods. (3) Eat more fiber. (4) Eat only whole grain breads and pastas. (5) No eating after 7 p.m. (6) Eat five or six smaller meals. (7) Consume only 2% dairy products. (8) Drink no soda or sugar sweetened drinks.

### CHURCH FITNESS CHALLENGE

Body Beautiful led group exercise sessions at each congregation. Following in their pastors’ footsteps, members followed a plan of cardio and resistance training and a nutritional diet plan while supporting and cheering on their pastors.



Trainers Andrea and Bethany



# PASTORS' FITNESS CHALLENGE

**PASTOR ROBERT GRIFFIN**  
Christian Embassy Church

Weight lost: 5 lbs, 3 inches, 3% body fat

**3<sup>RD</sup>**  
PLACE

As a newcomer to personal training, Pastor Griffin was eager to learn new exercises and strongly represent his age group. He knew his success was in the journey. From the timed abdominal sets to the boxing reps, each session brought something new.

“The most difficult thing was realizing how long 60 seconds can be when performing exercises,” he says.

As an avid runner, it was important for him to make measurable gains. The pre- and post-challenge fitness tests served as a true indicator, with his marks for flexibility, sit-ups and bench press jumping a group-leading 27%. He entered the challenge in top physical form and continues to demonstrate that fitness has no age limitations.

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314.741.4GOD (4463) [www.christianembassychurch.org](http://www.christianembassychurch.org)



# PASTORS' FITNESS CHALLENGE

**PASTOR RAMONE COLLINS**  
Calvary Missionary Baptist Church

Weight lost: 14 lbs., 3.2 inches, 6.1% body fat

**2<sup>ND</sup>**  
PLACE

Pastor Collins' participation was the result of divine intervention. "It was pure need. I was heading the wrong way fast and had recently been praying for the motivation to start," he admitted. He knew it was time to make health a priority.

From the first workout, Pastor Collins knew he had to endure, no matter how much it hurt, no matter how long it had been since his high school workout days. At first, his trainers sensed his difficulty finishing each workout, but each week he performed better and stronger. At home, he performed a basic cardio/resistance workout to improve his fitness between training sessions.

During the challenge, he was greatly impacted by the Food Rules and nutrition logs to encourage better food choices. He noted, "The Food Rules made me feel bad about how I was eating, once saw how sluggish I was and understood their importance. I made the changes and felt better about myself." He is grateful for his challenge and inspired changes.

Christian Embassy Church, 801 Mousette Lane, Centerville, IL 62267  
618.332.1256

# PASTORS' FITNESS CHALLENGE

And the winner is...

**PASTOR CEDRIC PORTIS SR.**  
Third Presbyterian Church

Weight lost: 17 lbs., 2.7 inches, 4.5% body fat

**1<sup>ST</sup>**  
PLACE

When Pastor Portis committed, he believed the opportunity of the Today in Church 30 day Fitness Challenge fit his personal lifestyle. "I am a very competitive person, and win, lose or draw, I really enjoy competition." In his college football days more than 15 years ago, his game-day eating habits were balanced by his rigorous exercise schedule. After college, his workout time and intensity dwindled, and his ministry responsibility grew from associate to full-time. During these post-football years, he began to struggle with managing a healthy body weight.

His weight rose to nearly 300 pounds, until a renewed spiritual and physical commitment forced him to take responsibility for his health. He led with his actions.

He explains, "There was plenty of lip service from the pulpit regarding your body being a temple. I was on the way to severe obesity, poor health and possibly disease. My testimony was to inspire others to choose not to eat themselves to death."

Today, Pastor Portis continues his active lifestyle and moderate eating habits. He regularly bowls, plays golf and weight trains in his well equipped home gym. His wife, Varonaki Portis, uses her culinary passion to prepare healthy family meals.

Third Presbyterian Church, 9990 Highway 367 (at Chambers), St. Louis, MO 63136  
314.868.9600



*Today in Church* magazine would like to thank all the pastors who participated in this exciting event, as well as Ann Riggs and the Body Beautiful staff and all our sponsors.

Join us for the Second Annual *Today in Church* Fitness Challenge in 2008, a competition of first lady vs. first lady. The grand prize just might be a pink Cadillac.

