Sweat Inspiration

With gospel aerobics, you can keep the faith—and lose the pounds

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These days, “going to church” doesn’t just mean walking with the Lord—it means jumping, kicking and high-stepping, too. Gospel aerobics—heart-pumping cardio workouts set to uplifting gospel grooves—are growing in popularity at churches and recreation centers nationwide.

The church is “where the community looks for guidance, direction and spiritual motivation,” says gospel-aerobics pioneer Stephanie Jackson-Rowe, president and founder of the Chicago-based Christian Aerobics and Fitness Association (CAFA). She adds that the church is especially convenient for residents of neighborhoods that lack health clubs or safe recreational facilities.

Since Chicagoan Tammy Daniels, 37, began her thrice-weekly gospel-aerobics regimen at her church last November, she has lost 10 pounds and gained healthy eating knowledge from her group’s visiting nutritionist. “The experience of praying and asking God to get you through—channeling that higher power to keep you from passing out—is so powerful,” Daniels says.

Fitness personality Victoria Johnson offers a national directory of classes on her website (visit www.victoriajohnson.com/ Ministry/gad.shtml.) To start a class at your church, seek certified instructors who belong to such organizations as the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America (AFAA) or the American Council on Exercise (ACE). Jackson-Rowe’s organization, Joy to Be Fit, helps churches set up their own programs (773-385-6684 or visit www.joytobefit.com). You can also check out fitness guru Donna Richardson’s hit gospel-aerobics workout on DVD, Sweating in the Spirit ($19.98).

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