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XXXtra credit

By venturing into the belly of the beast, Craig Gross earns respect

by *Matthew Schniper*

[Note: Extended Web version]

Indy: Is XXX Church solely an online ministry? Do you have a physical house of worship?

Gross: No, we don't actually have a church building. We mainly exist online; however, we've probably been a part of 250 or so church events. Most weekends you can find us at church speaking about [pomography]. But we're an online community.

Indy: When did you become a pastor and a porn pastor?

Gross: In '99, I was ordained at East Side Christian Church in Fullerton, Calif. I started at Hope International University and got my degree and was a youth pastor. In 2002, [XXX Church] basically came out of all that work in the youth ministry dealing with kids and seeing how they were affected by this issue and we decided to do something about it. [People] started calling us "sexperts" and "porn pastors."

Indy: Why the format of a religious organization to take this issue on? Why not just a social action group?

Gross: We're so untraditional in our approach, and we break down a lot of religious misconceptions people have. But you can't take away the fact that pastors started it. We toyed around at the start with having another dot-com that doesn't have the word "church" in it. But in the end it worked, because I think a lot of people are interested in Jesus, but not in religion. Whether you're religious or not, it doesn't matter if you have a porn issue. You still want help.

I think we've gotten to that point with porn, where not a lot of people talk about it in the helping way, so people are like, "I'll take what I can get with this. Forget the Jesus stuff. But hey, these guys are on to something." Hopefully people don't just throw out the Jesus stuff, because we think that's important.

Indy: Do you preach a certain religious message while helping people? Will you counsel other faiths?

Gross: You have to dig for some of it. I think on the surface, you're like, "Where's the Bible verses?" It's there, but it's different than just, "Hey we're Christians and we're loud and this is what we believe and we're right and you're wrong." We say, "Here's what Jesus has done in my life, but we can still talk about porn whether you buy that or not."

I get some flak from Christians that say I don't use enough Bible passages in the debate with Ron. If I'm going to speak at a college that doesn't hold the Bible with the



The Bible, XXX Church-style.

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