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Sexual abuse counsellor backs church's weekend of `anti-porn'

Bell Block pastor Grant Harris is bringing porn and pancakes into his church this weekend.

And his actions have the support of a highly regarded sexual abuse counsellor.

The Northpoint Baptist senior pastor wants people to confront and deal with the issues of pornography addiction and the sexualisation of society.

To get the ball rolling Mr Harris has taken the bold step of inviting United States anti-porn crusader and seminary-trained evangelist Craig Gross to host a weekend of "anti-porn" at his Bell Block church.

Mr Gross is a founding member of the controversial online Christian ministry www.xxxchurch.com.

He has been featured on US television networks CNN and ABC, and is a regular at American porn conventions, where he hands out Bibles and T-shirts proclaiming "Jesus loves porn stars".

He is also regularly picketed by Christians.

This weekend he will hold three group discussions called Porn and Pancakes, Porn and Parents and Porn Sunday.

Mr Harris says the sessions will give parents and children ways to deal with the issue of pornography.

"I haven't had anyone say it's wrong inviting Mr Gross, but there are a lot of churches watching me and waiting to see how this weekend turns out," he said.

Mr Harris said there were people who did not see pornography as a problem in their lives and he was not trying to change their minds.

Instead, he said his church was standing up for what it believed in and giving people who felt it was affecting their lives ways to deal with it.

"There is a general sexualisation of the community.

"We use sex to sell, as the old saying goes: sex sells. But is that healthy? We'd like to say no," Mr Harris said.

His opinion is echoed by Lorraine Jans, a counsellor at the Taranaki Safer Family Centre which deals with sexual violence, sexual offending and counselling of children.

"We'd support anyone trying to break the cycle of pornography. One of the things we are discovering is that more and more relationships break up because of porn addictions," she said.

The pastor said people were coming from Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch to attend the weekend discussions and local interest and intrigue had been building.

He said he was aware he was sticking his neck out, but as a pastor he had to stand up for what he believed in.

"It's not normal for a church to be so open about porn, but why not? It's an issue that is not going away. I like to live life on the edge, so let's see what happens," he said.

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