

Searching for Lost Souls

David Hart is known as a godfather of sorts in Goth evangelism.

Pastor David Hart, 51, of San Diego often dresses in Gothic clothes and heads off into the night to befriend kids who are immersed in the city's Goth subculture. Nothing unusual about that. Hart's been doing it since the 1980s.

That's how he met Lythia several years ago. She was about 14 then, and she was conducting a vampire ceremony for friends outside a Gothic dance club late one night.

Hart watched as she cut herself, drained her blood into a cup and passed it around for her friends to do the same. When it came back to her she did an incantation and sent it back around. Each person took a sip this time, and when the cup reached her again she drank and ended the ritual.

Lythia was practicing magic, trying to turn herself and her friends into vampires. Afterward, Hart attempted to befriend her.

"You're that pastor who's invaded our club," she said. "There's no sense talking to you. You'll just freak out about the occult and demons."

"That's not where I was going at all," Hart answered. "I was just are you going to keep from getting AIDS?"

As a young teen, Lythia hadn't yet fathomed that possibility. Hart's concern led to a friendship between the two, and he still sees her sometimes in his role as pastor of The Sanctuary in San Diego, a church he founded in 1986. He was just ending a career as a concert promoter in Southern California and started the church to reach heavy-metal kids.

Today, among his many roles, he's pastor for MCM Music, a Gothic music label that's home to Christian artists Saviour Machine, Rackets and Drapes, and Eva O—formerly known as Evil Eva of secular punk-Goth band Christian Death. He's the author of *It's All Rock-n-Roll* and the founder of Rock Talks Ministries, through which he lectures at schools, churches and youth camps on such topics as "Getting Goths to Christ."

Hart says Goths are summarily misjudged by society.

"Goth kids are intellectual," he says. "[They] are well-read, artistic and passive. They mull and brood. Whereas metal music is more about banging your head on the wall, Goth music is more about staring at the wall."

They tend to be dark on the outside, he says, because "they focus on reality and think life is painful and that we're all shooting toward death. Most Goths have been told they're fat, ugly, stupid. The most common wound I hear is, 'I'll never amount to anything.'"

To combat that rejection, Hart goes out of his way to build relationships with them. He went once with a group of non-Christian Goths to a Marilyn Manson concert and ended up being less offended by the concert than by the behavior of Christians who picketed the show.

Says Hart: “[The Christians] screamed at me that I was going to hell if I went in that show. All I could think was: You don’t understand. I’m going to hell if I don’t go in that show—woe to me if I don’t preach the gospel. They had no idea who I was or what I was doing. They were just screaming.”

Hart admits he sometimes feels isolated in ministry, and young pastors out of Bible colleges tend to think he’s too old to understand youth culture.

“I feel like the old Indian fighter in the Westerns—where the young cavalry lieutenant is telling the old scout how it will work. I’ve done youth work for 30 years, and I’m not naive,” he says.

That dedication won Lythia’s heart. After two years as Hart’s friend she gave her life to Jesus. After another year, she led her boyfriend to Christ. Today she’s free of vampirism.

For more information about The Sanctuary, San Diego, log on at