

Irish Worship Leaders Find Unlikely Pulpit in Minneapolis Pub

Natives of Belfast, Northern Ireland, Paul Kyle and his family are spreading the gospel worldwide through song

When Paul Kyle and his wife, Hilary, packed up their furniture and moved from Belfast, Northern Ireland, to Minneapolis in 1994 with their seven children, they had no idea what was in store.

“We asked ‘why Lord?’ many times—especially when temperatures in winter dipped into the minus 70s,” said Paul Kyle, a noted worship leader whose songs “Lord Jesus We Enthroned You” and “The Flame” have been popularized worldwide.

In Belfast, Paul Kyle had given up a career as a medical doctor a short time after his graduation in the 1970s to launch a unique endeavor. In a city infamous for religious hate, he established Community of the King, a fellowship that brought together Protestants and Catholics in both life and worship.

Moving West in 1994, the Kyles—whose children range in age from 27 to 12—felt inspired by the Irish saint St. Brendan, who set sail in a leather boat some 1,500 years ago to preach the gospel to nonbelievers “over the ocean.” They soon discovered that the Lord still needed the Irish to reach unchurched America.

Soon after settling in the United States, the Kyles were asked

to set up “something spiritual” on Sundays by the owner of a well-known Irish pub in downtown Minneapolis. “Something low-key and casual, that people could enjoy a good influence without having things shoved down their throats,” as Paul Kyle recalls the job description.

Like a modern-day version of the Partridge family, the Kyles spent five years as a regular musical feature at the pub. But instead of using their music simply to entertain, the Kyles used their songs, Irish folkdance and storytelling to share the gospel during the Sunday Spiritual Luncheon.

Thousands passed through the pub’s new “St. Brendan’s Lounge,” as local newspapers and television reported on the outreach with some amazement. Many visitors found their way back to God. After five years Paul and Hilary were ready to start a new fellowship with people they had reached at the pub.

“In my Father’s house there are many mansions,” Paul Kyle sings on his latest CD *The Ascent of the Bright Hostage*. Similarly, the Kyles’ new house, known as the Father’s House, also has plenty of room for some of their new friends, who have moved in to the 6,500-square-foot home to share their lives and be discipled on a day-by-day basis. Some 50 believers gather each Friday night in the “Upper Room” for worship and teaching.

The Kyles have continued their reconciliation ministry from the States, and they eventually began to do similar work internationally, traveling to such nations as Korea and Australia. Paul Kyle has also recorded several CDs, including *The Flame*, whose title cut became the unofficial Olympic theme song in Australia when he recorded it in 2000.

Kyle said the song, which is still sung across Australia, is about Christians receiving a torch of faith from their ancestors, and it issues a challenge for listeners to be faithful to pass the torch on to the next generation.

The Kyles have taken their music and Irish spirituality to all kinds of settings in places from Australia to Sweden, and as Irish Protestants they intentionally reach out to Catholics. Not long ago they performed and shared the gospel in a home for the elderly run by Catholic nuns in Nice, France.

During the ministry time, Paul and Hilary were able to lead all those present in prayers of repentance. Paul said that afterward the director told him, "You should hold such a meeting in every old people's home in France."

Currently Paul is putting the finishing touch on a Father's Love musical. In August, the cast and crew—who are from various countries—will gather in Minneapolis for its debut in an area church, aptly named Our Father's House.

Herti Dixon in Minneapolis