

# Ash cloud postpones musical mission trip to Ukraine six months

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A volcanic ash cloud that caused a \$1 billion disruption to international airline travel forced a Texas Baptist choir to postpone by six months its concert tour in Ukraine.

The [North Central Texas chapter of the Singing Men of Texas](#) had been scheduled to leave the United States April 18 for a series of concerts in six Ukrainian cities.

A cloud of volcanic ash that disrupted international airline travel forced the Singing Men of North Central Texas mission trip to Ukraine to be rescheduled. Organizers of the mission trip include (left to right) international evangelist Michael Gott; Buntsev Ivan, pastor of Komsomolânsk Christian Baptist Church; John Bell, president of The Singing Men of North Central Texas and associate pastor of music at First Baptist Church in Bridgeport; Zygaleiko Alexander, director of Kremenchuk Regional Bible College; and Don Blackley, director of the Singing Men of North Central Texas and music minister in the "classic service" at Lake Pointe Church in Rockwall.

(PHOTO/Courtesy of John Bell)

That concert series had to be rescheduled for late October when an eruption in southern Iceland created a cloud of volcanic ash that grounded airplanes throughout much of Europe.

Rather than making a slow journey by chartered bus over questionable roads, the Singing Men of Texas had planned to take a cruise ship up the Dnieper River—which bisects Ukraine—beginning April 20 in the Black Sea port city of Odessa and concluding April 30 in Kiev.

Working in cooperation with the

Ukrainian Baptist Union and international evangelist Michael Gott, the Singing Men of Texas were slated to perform in churches and concert halls in six cities along the way. Following a one-hour concert at each venue, Gott was scheduled to preach an evangelistic message and offer an invitation for people in attendance to profess faith in Christ publicly.

When leaders of the Singing MenNASA satellite view of volcanic ash cloud of Texas recognized the volcanic path.

ash cloud was jeopardizing the group's original schedule, they began to put together contingency plans, according to a blog posted by Derrel Thompson, minister of music and education at Valley Grove Baptist Church in Stephenville and treasurer for the singing group's North Central Texas chapter.

"Plans were being drafted to get a soloist or two, or an ensemble of eight, to Ukraine as quickly as we could so that some type of concert would be able to take place this week," Thompson wrote.

However, pastors in Ukraine contacted the group to let them know they would rather reschedule the concerts. Viking River Cruise contacted Gott to let him know an after-season cruise ship would be made available for the

group.

“So, we are rescheduling our trip to Ukraine to late October,” Thompson wrote.

“Keep praying for us as we redo plans. The Gotts are meeting with the pastors this week to set up things for October. Also, pray for the thousands of people who have been stranded as a result of all this.”