

Singing Men of Texas praise God, deliver hope to western Ukraine

May 15, 2015

More than 14,000 people heard a message of hope from the [Singing Men of Texas](#) during a dozen recent concerts at eight venues in Ukraine, and more than half registered spiritual commitments to Christ.



Singing Men of Texas perform in Kiev during their trip to Ukraine. It marked the Texas Baptist group's fourth mission trip to Ukraine, conducted in partnership with international evangelist Michael Gott, but the first since armed conflict erupted in the nation in 2013. Russia seized Crimea last year, and continuing tension weighs heavy on the minds of Ukrainian Christians, some participants reported.

"Night after night, every pastor has told us how much it meant to them and their people that we came to Ukraine during a time such as this," Darrel Thompson, minister of music at Taylor's Valley Baptist Church in Temple,

[wrote in a blog](#) posted during the concert tour.

“There is great unrest and uncertainty in this country. Ukraine needs a word of hope. We came to deliver that word of hope.”

In some cities, people called the Texas Baptists “angels of hope,” said Todd Wilson, minister of music at [First Baptist Church in Abilene](#). Although the locations the Singing Men of Texas visited were far removed from the parts of the country where violence occurred, the local residents felt “an overwhelming sense of despair” as they “lived under a cloud and under a shadow” of uncertainty, he noted.

“We hadn’t really intentionally programmed our concerts to include songs that necessarily included the word ‘hope,’ but the people heard a message of hope,” said Wilson, director of the Singing Men of West Texas. “More than anything, we kept hearing, ‘You came.’ ... Just the fact that we were there spoke volumes to them.”

Originally, the 100-voice choral group had planned to travel by riverboat through South Central Ukraine, but Russian occupation of Crimea and violence to the east prompted a change in itinerary, said Jay Ghormley, minister of music at [Shearer Hills Baptist Church in San Antonio](#), who coordinated the concert tour. Instead, the group journeyed on four charter buses through the western part of the country.



Total attendance at the concerts in Ukraine was 14,350, with 7,793 people indicating their willingness to become committed followers of Christ and requesting additional contact. "As a result, we were able to minister in areas where we normally would not have gone," Ghormley noted. "In fact, we added several more concerts to our original schedule at the request of pastors who guaranteed we would fill the halls if we performed a second concert at the same place."

In every city where the choir sang, people responded appreciatively, participants noted.

"Nearly every concert was packed beyond capacity, as people struggled to find a place to sit, stand and hear the gospel presented in song and preaching," Larry Collins of DeSoto, a member of the North Central chapter of Singing Men of Texas, wrote in program notes for the group's concert at [The Heights Baptist Church in Richardson](#) after their return to the United States.

In each hall, audience members received the choir warmly and listened attentively to Gott's sermon, he noted. Total attendance for the concerts was 14,350, and 7,793 people signed cards indicating their willingness to

become committed followers of Christ and requesting additional contact.

“The response to the gospel was nothing short of breathtaking,” Collins said. “Words fail us as we try to explain or recount what God did in our midst. We can no more take credit for what happened than a riverbed can take credit for what flows through it.”

Wilson saw a “direct correlation” between the level of response and the tension the Ukrainians have experienced due to armed conflict in their country the last two years. In previous trips to Ukraine, the number of people registering responses when invited to make a commitment to Christ typically was around 40 percent. This year, it was 54 percent.

“People were more receptive and open to the gospel,” he said.

The Singing Men of Texas will mark their 40th anniversary with a concert during the Tuesday evening session of the Baptist General Convention of Texas annual meeting, Nov. 10 in Frisco. The concert will feature music from the group’s Ukraine tour, along with video highlights of the trip.