

Letter from Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch to Gerhard Wiebe Feb.11, 1790

From the diary of Ältester Gerhard Wiebe, pages [197](#) – [199](#).

Translated by Helen Ens, May 2020. Edited by Glenn Penner 7 Jul 2025

After we had mailed the letter giving authority for the election of an Elder, dated March 11, 1790, to the our Mennonite Church in Russia, we received following correspondence from the deputies . NB They had not yet received the letter giving them that authority.

Esteemed Elder Gerhard Wiebe!

Via a letter from Danzig (written by the previously named, Mr. Hans Momber [#8293], with signatures of the other esteemed ministers and deacons of the Mennonite Church in city confines of Danzig, written November 29, 1789) we have been informed, that the person who was chosen to be our Elder, the very well-loved and esteemed man, Peter Epp, after a very painful illness has been called from the woes of this earth to the eternal joy. The loss that our church has suffered through the death of this worthy man can not be described; the tragedy of this loss has been magnified by the fact that, according to some correspondence we received from the church in Danzig we were blamed in part for the death of this so worthy man of God. The above-mentioned church, according to their judgement, says the following:

"It is none-the-less true that the dangers of the trip to your destination contributed greatly to his illness; because of this he was consumed, as is a light, (candle?) internally. The majority of us saw this in advance."

We would like every person who loves the truth and has common sense to consider that we have been blamed wrongly. However, we console ourselves with the will of the Almighty, who holds the power over life and death, who could have endowed this highly esteemed man with health and strength, had that been his holy will and allowed him to travel safely to our settlement. Because this our hope has been dashed, we are again in the position worry and sadness regarding the manner in which we will be able to receive an Elder. We find ourselves in the position to again ask the assistance of yours and other churches to somehow find the means of supplying us with an Elder. We beg you earnestly to recognize our need and pray that someone will again come forward and join us to become our Elder who will lead and govern us.

The 600 Rubel we sent to Danzig we ask that the Danzig church would receive them and use them in the future for travel expenses, should a potential Elder be found.

We can also report to you that the last settlers of the year 1789 arrived here, at the place of our settlement, on the first of August. We are not, however, at the place we first planned to be. Upon the wishes and precautions of the dukes we were directed to a better and more secure region. Last summer we were not able to do much cultivating of the land, except we were able to make some hay, and some people began to do some building. The area has also been surveyed to decide where villages could be started. the plan is for 16 more or less families to a village, according to need and availability of water. Many will also build near the Dnieper River.

But what the rebel group will do is hard to know; they still want to find a different region. Now they have two ministers, a Joh. Klaassen from Rosenkranz [#199161] and a certain Franz Pauls [#110649]. Their church community consists of some 36 families and they live secluded from the rest. [This “rebel” group consisted mostly of people formerly belonging to the Frisian congregations in Prussia. They did not merge with the much larger Flemish group, but broke away early on]

Our region is about 85 Werst behind the newly erected city of Ekaterinoslaw on the same side of the Dnieper. Our main village is Chortitz. We beg you to honour us with a letter so that we know what you think of our circumstances and what your decisions are. Because the government and also the Post Office has been transferred from Krementchuk to Ekaterinoslav your letters to us would have to be addressed over Krementchuk to Ekaterinoslav and asked to be held there until we come to retrieve them.

We also have to report that on Feb. 7 two men from the Wischenka Colony were here, a Christian Hoffer and Paul Glanzer; they gave us a letter to read (written by you from Elbing on the Werder) and according to the contents of the letter, they, after staying with us for a few days, traveled to our colony.

We close for this time and with our hearty greetings an best wishes for your well-being. We remain with respect the same

The ministerial and servants

Jacob Hoepner, Joh. Bartsch

Krementchuk, Feb. 11, 1790

