

Letter from Gerhard Wiebe to the Mennonite Ministry in Chortitza – 19 June 1791

From the Diary of Elder Gerhard Wiebe pp. [207](#), [208-209](#).

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Year 1791 Month of June

The second letter dated June 19 to the Hon Servants in Russia.

Dearly beloved co-workers in the merciful Good News of Christ! who are staying as foreigners and colonists in the Russian Royal Government of Ekaterinoslav: Grace be unto you and peace from God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, our redeemer and Lord, who offered himself for our sins so as to save us from this present evil world; may the spirit of grace enlighten you more and more so that your walk may be to the honour and glory of the grace of God and a light for the Lord, to preach the Word of Truth, leading many to eternal justice and be saved by grace. Amen

Dear Brethren! We have waited in vain for an answer from you for a long time. The hon. servant group of Danzig has written to you later asking you what to do with the money sent by you for the late Elder Peter **Epp**, which is now lying idle. They also asked about your well-being, but everything in vain. This makes us sad and we really would like to know what the reason is for the lack of communication. We have, since we learned to know the brethren at Wischenka [the Hutterite colony], written many a letter to them and always received an answer. What is the cause that we do not receive an answer from you? We ask you very kindly, when this letter comes into your hands, please write us an answer, for we are anxious to know how you are. There are two fellows from the Frisian Church in our area here in Prussia, named Klaassen and Engbrecht who came from your area who are to have said that our church there is supplied with Elders and ministers; but none of our co-servants have had opportunity to speak with them because right after their arrival they left for the other, above mentioned, church and we do not know where they are at present; also we do not know if their words are completely trustworthy. They have not spoken well of the deputies **Hoepfner** and **Bartsch**. Some are doubting them and deem these returnees to be careless youngsters. Therefore we beg you to first of all report on the spiritual welfare of your church. Are you diligently studying and walking according to God's Word? Are you observing the holy ordinances of baptism and communion? Who has been ordained to be your Elder? Have more members been called into service? How are your meeting places? Are church members obediently following the lead of the ministers and walking in the good way of life? We suppose, not without reason, that there are some rough, difficult sheep in your flock; wisdom and vigilance are called for in the service and work for the Lord. O dear brethren! do not neglect to pray fervently to the Lord, who can do more than we can ask for or understand, that he will lead and pasture your flock; may he, through his spirit, enliven and strengthen you in your calling so that God may be praised and glorified and souls be edified. Then your church will be a guiding light in a dark place, yes, Amen. Allow your walk in love to be a model for the church, so that with the apostle Paul you can say: Follow us, dear brethren! and look up to those who walk thus and us who are your example. Admonish and punish diligently, be it the right or wrong time: For the Lord will soon return and will require report

from his stewards and he will reward the faithful servants, the bad ones will be rewarded according to their deeds.

Secondly we would very much like to know how your physical conditions are: 1. The substance and fertility of your land/soil; 2. whether you live under your own roof; 3. whether you have settled in closed villages or are living here and there separated, as we do over here; 4. How far away you are from Ekaterinoslav, Kremenchuk and Alexandrovsk; 5. how or what you do about trades people like smiths, millers and the like; 6. whether you have horses and good cows; 7. if you can obtain lumber and wood for fuel; 8. if you can sell grain and dairy products like butter and cheese; etc.

From our area we can report that few changes have taken place since you left except that several have passed on from this life on earth, among them Hon. Gerdt von Bergen [#337192] of the Lichtenau [Heubuden] congregation.

The past two winters have been quite mild, especially the last one; it froze very little so that we could not drive on any ice. Last summer our grain crop was plentiful and this year the prospects are also good. God be praised for it, may he give us grateful hearts and wisdom to use it wisely with gratitude. Notify my relative, Bernhard **Penner** [8755], and fellow servant, whom I have never met in person, that his brother, Isaac **Penner** [#197454] in Elbing has passed on and his widow has married Michael **Wiens** [#145190].

Finally I submit you into the care of the Most High with greetings from myself and our group of servants, remaining your co-elder and brother in Christ

Gerhard Wiebe

PS A friendly greeting from Hans **Penner** to Hon. Jacob **Wiens**

PS. The Danzig congregation has established a rural congregation [in Neuenhuben] and Jacob **Kroeker** [#16541] and J. [Jacob] **Bartsch** [#166441] have been elected as ministers and, to the pleasure of many, have initiated their services.