

Letter from co-Ältester David Epp, Russia, to Ältester Jacob de Veer, Danzig, 1792.
From the diary of Ältester Gerhard Wiebe, Ellerwald, pages [224](#) – [226](#).

Translated by Helen Ens (no date). Checked by Glenn Penner, July 2025.

From the Elder David Epp of Russia to the Elder Jacob de Veer in Dantzic dated March 11 (old style) 1792. [received April 1792]

Since I am on colony business in Ekaterinoslav and I received a letter from you and just now received your letter of March 5, 1791, and you in all letters have asked how we are faring in our spiritual and physical lives I shall report. In the first place I have to report, with sorrow, that our dear Elder, Hon. Ohm Boerend **Penner**, after a long and very painful illness, has exchanged this fleeting life with the eternal, which has caused us great sadness and created confusion: nonetheless, it has pleased the God in his eternal wisdom, through majority of votes of the brethren, to elect me to this highly important calling, and so, on February 2, 1792, I was ordained by our dear fellow servant, hon. Ohm Jacob **Wiens** to this important work. May the Lord grant us wisdom, strength and power to fulfill the obligations of this important office to God's glory and the edification of souls. I left Danzig without an "Attest" (certificate) from the elder Ohm P. **Epp** for the congregation in Russia because he was also destined to go to Russia as an Elder, but since it has pleased the Lord over death and life to direct him, not to Russia, but to the longed for Canaan, I now ask you to supply me with the necessary certificate from your church.

Concerning our physical situation, almost everyone is now living under their own roof, since we already had lumber for building. We live at a distance of approximately 9 miles from the newly built town of Ekaterinoslav, and on the [?] side where the waterfalls in the Dnieper cease our borders begin and go all the way to Alexander[ovsk], which is situated on the Kremet side. Our area is at a fair altitude but still fertile; it produces good winter and summer rye and wheat, barley, oats, millet, buckwheat, "arnautischer" wheat. In the gardens all kinds of produce for the kitchen are raised, also potatoes. We have lots of pasture, also hay land in abundance. In many years Lucern, a kind of clover, grows tall, some years a lot, sometimes none. Last summer was a very dry one. It is a bit warmer than Germany. We have had good weather until Christmas, when there was some frost. This winter it has snowed a lot and frozen hard, in my opinion over 70 degrees [?] and lasted until March; today the ice moves on the Dnieper. As soon as the snow melts and the soil is frost free we have pasture for our cattle.

Our colony consists of 7 villages. The largest has 44 and the smallest 16 farmsteads [*Feuerstellen*]. We are not lacking trades people, except for a smithy and a miller. Smiths are in our neighbouring Russian towns, who do the necessary smith work for us. A miller is in our colony, Russian style, and our people rely very much on hand operated mills. Above that, there are ship-mills in the Dnieper. There are enough good horses and cows in our area; you meet up with cows every bit as good as those in Germany; we have bought some at 10, 15 up to 20 Rubel a piece, horses 20, 30 up to 40 rubel a piece. Butter in Ekaterinoslav sells for 10 cop. or according to D.C. 12 groschen [Danzig Currency],

cheese 12 cop. We hope to be able to sell our merchandise for higher prices in Kherson. Because the Dnieper is navigable ships up to 40 Last [the Last was a unit of measurement which had many meanings. In shipping it was a volume of displacement for a ship] can come close to our colony; right now one is anchored close to our colony.

Concerning the money that was sent for Ohm Peter Epp, we ask you that you would take care of it by mail. Send it over Riga to Ekaterinoslav under the address of hon. Jacob Hoepner, it will be given to us.

In closing I ask you to accept these few lines in love and I am eagerly awaiting an answer. I commit you to the grace of God. I remain with heartfelt greetings with the dearly won peace in all love your brother and weak co-labourer of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

David Epp

