

**Letter from Gerhard Wiebe, Ältester of the Elbing-Ellerwald congregation to Johann Wiebe, co-Ältester of the Chortitza congregation in Russia.**

From the diary of Gerhard Wiebe, pages [246-249](#).

Translated by Helen Ens (no date). Edited by Glenn penner, 30 mar 2020 and 11 July, 2025.

To my brother's son Joh. Wiebe at Chortitza in Russia, 10 miles from the newly built city of Ekaterinoslav, have written the following under 7th of March [1793]:

Heartily beloved co-worker in the gracious Gospel:

The God of peace sanctify and strengthen you through the power of his good Spirit, to work according to his holy will and pleasure, that you may be a glory(?) to his holy name through Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Your pleasant [welcome] writing dated Nov. 18, 1792, I received just after the New Year's festivities; the enclosed letters I have forwarded to all the designated places. For us and the extended family it was a joy to learn of your well-being; for I trust your, to me well known honesty, that you would write nothing but the truth. One can easily picture or imagine, and it is based on experience, that to start making a living on new, untilled soil in a desert-like environment must be very challenging and requires hard work, initiative [?] to build up and produce sustenance for the family. Nevertheless, if the God rich in blessings grants his blessing and health, then, with time the endeavours will be fruitful, if only God is served and loved; with diligent hard work and well-planned frugality your best efforts will bring results. I hope for all the best for you and your wife and can imagine that in this you are a good example to your fellow men; and that you, as a result of your position, you will as much as is possible, through word and deed will strive to lead your congregation to the Lord Jesus. Prove yourself to be a true worker, who is rightly explaining the word of truth, flee all selfish thoughts, anger and unclean thoughts; and whatever else should not be found in a servant of Christ, and admonish others of the same so that the name of the Lord could be glorified through your good walk and teaching.

About our family I can report that we are still living and that my brother-in-law, Gerhard **Wiebe** [#485061], died last Fall. His youngest son Franz [#1008486] married Hon. Frantz von **Riesen's** [#1403103] oldest daughter and lives in his father's [place]. My wife is been sickly for many weeks and is then bed-ridden. Our two youngest children got married this winter. Margareta was married on February 21; her husband is Hon. B[ernhard] Penner's youngest son, by the name Jac. **Penner** [#1365628]. They will stay at our place and help us carry on our work. My son Isbrandt W.[iebe] was married February 28 with the surviving youngest daughter [#19764] of the late Peter **Dyck** of Herrnhagen, of whose past farmyard she is now the actual owner, for her dear mother also died. My son G.W. [Gerhard **Wiebe**] in Schadewaldes Feld [Schadwalderfelde] has been called to be a preacher by the congregation of Heuboden and he has already given

his first message [Antrittspredigt] based on text in Eph. 3,8. May the Lord be gracious unto him in the future. My children all together send their greetings to you.

Your dear mother is, as I heard recently, reasonably well, as is the old father P.E. [Peter **Enns**, #110262]. She is glad that we are all well. Your sister Agneta married a widower in Gnojou last Fall. He is a surviving son of Abraham v. Riesen from the village of Einlage, his name is Joh. v. **Riesen** [#196820]. Your brother G. W. [Gerhard Wiebe] is still at Jac. **Klassen** in Krebswald. All of them send friendly greetings to your family.

In many of our people there is a new inclination to move to Russia: because it is not allowed for us to buy land from other related religionists and also everything is so exaggeratedly expensive so that many have decided to emigrate. Some have already applied to the government for permission to leave but as yet have received no answer. Is all this in line with Prussian tolerance? You have, dear brother, experienced the emigration; what would be your advice concerning this? Would it be well if more families would do this? I beg you to let me know what your advice is when you write to me next time.

I would also like to hear how things are regarding a meetinghouse for your worship services. Have you built a meetinghouse for this purpose? Or do you preach in your own homes? Do you conduct your worship services in only one house or do you do so in several houses? Through word of mouth, I have heard that your congregation gathers at the friend P.A.'s [Peter **Albrecht**, #266342] place for worship and the Frisians have a meeting place in the fortress Alexandrovsk. Please, send me information concerning this.

Please let the dear brother-in-law J. v. **Kampen** [#196806] know that I have received his letter to Kherson via Warsaw, it is similar to yours, why is this thus? Later I also received his authority to receive the capital via the Russian H. Resident, which J. **Klassen** handed over to the government and consequently received the permission that the Capit. [capital] after retaining the "*Abschuss*" he could be paid out; About the *Sportel* the answer is still to come. We have already sent 400 Prussian florins to Danzig in the Fall, so that it would be sent along with the money for Hon. Peter Epp, which has happened. The dear brother-in-law v. Kampen will be able to get the information at the proper place where such monies are received. If in Elbing the *Sportel* fees should be higher than the small amount of interest, then the old mother will pay them.

It can be omitted to say [?] that the dear mother [? mother of Jacob v. Kampen – Maria Reimer, #197043?] has decided to entrust her capital to her two children that live here, against the interest, upon a signature. I made her aware of the loss of her monies, for her new son-in-law has let a few 1000 florins flow through his fingers in a few years and it is worrisome that she could lose the rest of her possessions. So much for news.

My dear one! We live in questionable times. Almost all of Europe is united against France in a war and they want to beat France. But they won't be able to restore life to the decapitated king; but many thousands will lose their lives as a result. What the great Judge of the world will say to this will be seen on the last day.

These are great punishments which cannot leave us indifferent. The sins have ripened into revenge. Let us repent honestly and pray that we not fall into the rod of punishment (?) and pray to Jesus for ourselves and others: Lord, spare your people, and do not deal with us according to our transgressions and do not reward us according to our wrongdoing which is great. Who knows, whether the merciful God will not hear the pleas of his servants and for Jesus sake give us grace and time for repentance and forgiveness. How strange things are in Poland right now! What will finally happen?

My dear co-worker! Be faithful in your service and watch carefully over your entrusted flock. It is a great thing to be a faithful servant. Above all, warn your siblings, that they flee sin and follow Jesus our Saviour. I greet you and all my friends and acquaintances. especially greet the dear servants in the church with the peace of Christ. The Lord bless you and all of us. Amen

I remain your old Elder and weak fellow servant.

Gerhard Wiebe

PS The enclosed letter please deliver promptly to D.[avid] **Dirksen** [#266336] together with friendly greetings. Written without my spectacles. A friendly greeting to the dear friend Peter Albr.[ect], together with the news that his sister, the former **Friesen** that lives at the Toepperdam, is still well, as far as I could find out.

