

#18/GW#4

On Sending Danzig Ältester Peter Epp to Russia From the Gerhard Wiebe Diary

Translated by Helen Ens, May 2020.

July 16, 1789

We met as ministers/servants, and the Hon. Cornelius Regier, who was traveling to Koenigsberg to serve with baptism and communion, also the Hon. Cornelius Warkentin of Rosenort were present. The letter of authority that the council of the Danzig church request, which is to accompany the Elder who goes to Russia, written by me, was read and signed. It reads as follows:

After Her Royal Majesty, Empress of Russia, had made the requested promises, a fairly numerous group of our brethren in the faith decided to emigrate to Russia, in order to work for and earn a living there as obedient subjects under the renowned government, and are already travelling to their designated place of residence (in the fruitful area next to the Nieper River above Cherson on the road to Perekop (?)) Therefore we, Elders and Ministers of the below named churches (which are called Mennonisten), as part of our duty of our calling, and because the emigrants have begged us repeatedly, find it necessary to send them an experienced Elder who will oversee the church, even after they already have elected servants out of their midst. For this important service the Hon. Peter Epp, at present the faithful Elder of the Danzig Church, has been chosen. His diligence, honesty and faithfulness has been proven during his thirty years of service for the Lord. After much prayerful consideration he has declared, in the fear of the Lord, to be willing to be sent on this important service.

We, the undersigned, authorize and send hereby, with consent of our congregations, our beloved co-elder, Peter Epp, under God's leading, to the mentioned brethren in faith in Russia, to the place of their settlement where he will be, as long as conditions demand it, the Elder and overseer, where he will, according to wisdom from God, guard and teach our Christian faith. He will preach the good news of Christ, according to the Holy Scriptures clear and simply; he will assist in the elections of Elders, ministers, deacons and ordain them; he will baptize adults who are repentant, upon the profession of their faith; he will serve Holy Communion to the members of the church; he will ostracize stubborn sinners, together with the ministers and brethren of the church and welcome and receive back into the church, those that are repentant; in summary, watch and assist so that church life will be clean and orderly.

Thus we recommend the church of God in Russia our Hon. co-elder, Peter Epp, emphatically. Obey him faithfully in all that is good according to Hebrews 19,17. Honour him, support him financially as is Christian duty according to 1. Tim. 5, 17; Luke 10, 7 and 1. Cor. 9,14 and others.

As this is our honest desire and prescription we, elders, ministers and deacons have signed in our own hands this authorization, and to make it official, have placed our seal on it. This was done in Danzig, on the twentieth day of the month of July, in the year of our Lord 1789.

In the name of the entire rector of servants the following have signed:

Of the Danzig Church:
[no names on this copy]

Of the Gr. Werder Church
[no names on this copy]

Of the Elbing Church
Gerhard Wiebe Elder
Anthony Woelke Minister
Peter Dyck Minister

Of the Heuboden Church
Cornelius Regier, Elder
Herman Wiens

NB. After the dear Elder, Peter Epp, had spoken his parting speech, he slowly grew weaker until finally on November 12 he left this world, not to go to Russia but to enter blessed eternity.