

Possible Offenses Against the Community and Assorted Recommendations for Living Well, Gleaned from the
Gathering of Assorted Mennonites Writing in Winnipeg, June 2025

by [Jeff Gundy](#) in the [September 2026](#) issue

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In Grünfeld the perils were many: roofs on buggies, mortgages,
and bicycles. Some even read novels. And later: living with a gangster,

tattooed or not. Smoking. Guns. The possibility of magic. To hold
the story for a decade, then tell it right out to a crowd of strangers.

To decide to live well, far from the village and church of one's youth
or right there with the whole stiff wounded bunch.

To suffer through exile, distance, intense velocity. Live in the Tower
of Babel, ruined or not. Acknowledge the untranslatability of the other.

Choose music as your primary value system, and wear flowered pants
to the first day of high school. Wonder if impalas know they are beautiful.

Dance with your daughters while the chickens need feed and water.
Trust that the rivers will continue getting cleaner, that we will all

somehow become more free. Attempt to read the other martyrologies,
contemplate their wounds, their broken icons. Who would abandon

magic, laughter, Plautdietsch, for the pallid and murderous patriarchy?
Just try to stay reasonably calm in the face of this assignment.

Keep at least six contradictions in your head. The leafy, brutal world
is all a dance underneath, all seafoam and rhythm. Imagine us all,

saints and sinners, whales and microbes, joyously entangled, whirling
and wild and gay, until we finally know the music and it is all we know.