

Developmental Editing: How
to make good pieces great.



The role of the editor

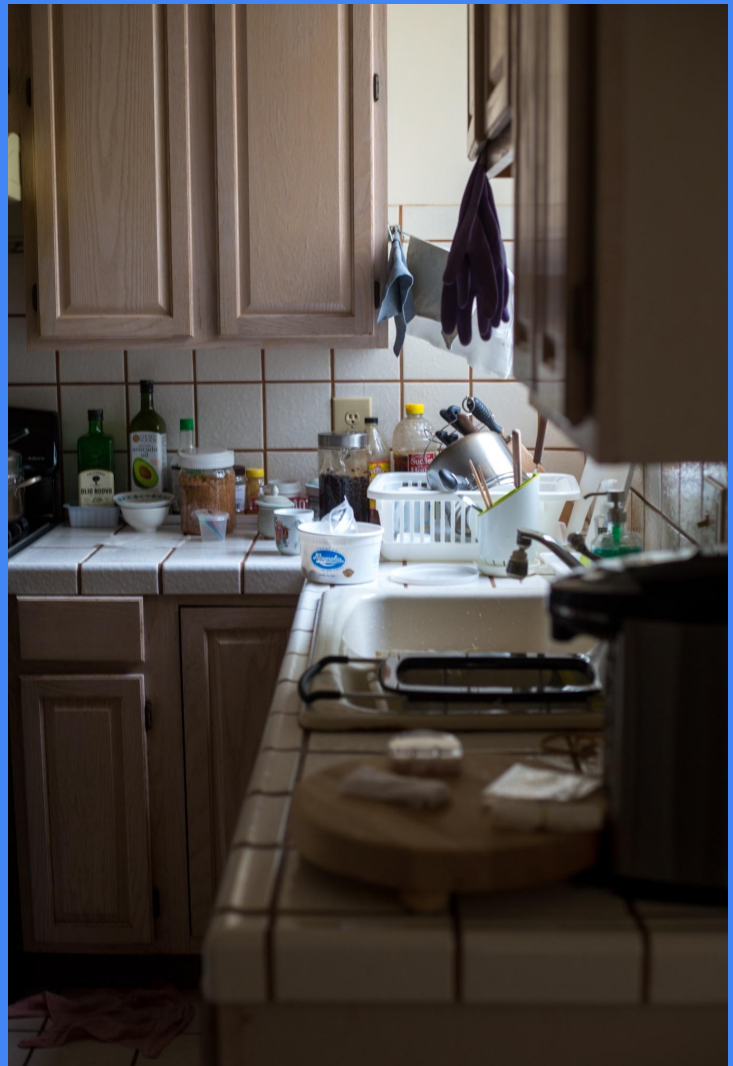
- We are the first to misunderstand.



Image:Ayo Ogunseinde (unsplash)

Copy Edit

The clean up edit
Grammar
Spelling
punctuation



Developmental Edit

The renovation edit

Idea

Structure

Flow



It's a deep dive





Let's do a poll.

A belief in the power of revision is at the heart of developmental editing.



“Revision brings us and our work to life. Isn’t this why we initially fell in love with writing? Writing moved us, and what we wrote moved others. Writing revised our world.” - Elizabeth Jarrett Andrew in *Living Revision: A Writer’s Craft as Spiritual Practice*

Of all the editors in all
the world, we should
believe the most in
developmental
editing.

Our why impacts our how

How are we with our writers?



“Will you trust me?”





Let's do a poll.

In his book *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, sociologist Rodney Stark set out to learn how the early church went from a rag-tag group of disciples to the religion of the empire in just three centuries.

One of the reasons, he concluded, was how the

That's what is happening at Community Bible Church, a non-denominational congregation in Ilderton, Ont. That's where Kathy Nelham, 67, a registered nurse who retired a few years ago from directing a personal care home for people with dementia, serves as a parish nurse.

She came up with the idea when the pandemic struck in 2020, suggesting to her pastor, Andrew Hall, that maybe the church could use her skills to help people cope with the health emergency.

Church witness includes nursing care

Retired health professionals making a difference

By John Longhurst

In 2020 when the pandemic struck, Kathy Nelham had a novel idea for her pastor at Community Bible Church in Ilderton, Ont. Could she use her skills as a retired nurse to help the congregation deal with the crisis?

"I told him it might be helpful for a nurse to help the church think through the health protocols and rules to help keep people safe," says Nelham, 67, a registered nurse who retired a few years before from directing a personal care home for people with dementia.

Andrew Hall, pastor of the non-denominational church, agreed, and invited her to help manage registration for attendance at services and look out for members who might have medical or other needs during lockdowns.

When the pandemic abated Nelham's ministry was so valued by Hall and the entire congregation that they asked her to stay as a member of the pastoral team.

"There are people I'm assigned to visit, shutins and seniors," she says. Usually she volunteers five or six hours a week.

During those visits Nelham pays attention to things other pastors might not notice – whether people are limping, having trouble getting out of a chair, rubbing a limb due to pain or maybe struggling to find words during a conversation.



Kathy Nelham has been using her nursing experience to serve on the pastoral care team at Community Bible Church in Ilderton, Ont.

"I'm trained to see things like that," she says. "I have that expertise. Those are not the kind of things a typical pastor will pick up on."

During one visit she learned a senior was having trouble using the stairs to get into her house. "I thought maybe we could build a ramp," she says. And church volunteers ended up doing just that.

Nelham describes her work as "broader than usual pastoral care. It increases the scope to physical concerns. We are whole people [and pain and other ailments] can affect us spiritually too."

For the church to keep Nelham on the pastoral team made sense – and not just from a medical and pastoral point of view, says Hall. It's also a way to be a witness in the community.

"As Christians, it's important we live

out the gospel by loving one another so others can see that love and know we're disciples of Jesus," he says. "Kathy can answer basic questions, give people comfort and confidence." He freely admits Nelham "can see things I might not see during a visit with members."

Her ministry is also a way for the congregation to show it is pro-life. "If we say we are pro-life, one way to show it is by helping people at the end-of-life stage," he says. "It shows we value life."

Nelham's ministry is as innovative as it is, also follows a long tradition of what's often called parish nursing.

Meeting the needs of the whole person

The current resurgence of parish nursing in North America came from Europe in

the 1980s as congregations here began to use health care professionals – either paid or volunteers – to meet the physical needs of their members and others.

The goal is to focus on the whole person, including their spiritual well-being. Today there are thousands of parish nurses in faith-based settings around the world. Parish nursing doesn't replace traditional health care. Instead it serves to bolster the health care system as long as possible and keep them healthy and well in their own homes for as long as they can stay there.

The Canadian Association of Parish Nursing Ministry (CAPNM.ca) defines a parish nurse as someone affirmed by a faith community to serve in a church, and possesses core competencies such as the ability to make assessments about the physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual dimensions of people's health. They are also able to promote positive health practices and behaviours.

In the case of seniors, parish nurses can evaluate their basic health, check on medications – ensure they are taking them as prescribed – and make sure they are eating well. They might notice when seniors are no longer able to do their own snow shovelling or yard care, require small repairs to their homes or need rides for appointments or groceries – tasks volunteers from a congregation could assist with.

If greater care is needed, parish nurses make referrals or link people with government or other agencies for different kinds of assistance. This can include advocating for them in the health care system.

For retired health care professionals, parish nursing is a way for them to continue to use their skills – to be of service to others in meaningful ways for a few hours or more a week.

Just the Church being the Church
When Saint Margaret's Anglican Church in Winnipeg was looking for a new pastoral care co-ordinator, they knew exactly what they wanted – someone with a nursing background.

"The reality is a large portion of our congregation is growing older," says rector



Rector Bonnie Dowling with nurse and pastoral care co-ordinator Holly Goossen at Saint Margaret's Anglican Church in Winnipeg.

Bonnie Dowling. "We thought it would be an asset to have someone on staff who has nursing skills and knowledge of the health care system."

In 2022 the church hired Holly Goossen, a registered nurse, to work ten hours a week at the church attending to the needs of parishioners. (She also continues a half-time position as a community health care nurse at Misericordia Hospital.) Goossen doesn't provide direct nursing

care in her church role. Instead she uses her training and experience to identify possible needs for medical intervention.

"My role is to help people connect with the medical care they need and to navigate the system," she says. It's "just the Church being the Church by attending to the needs of its members."

It's also a clear benefit to the community's overstretched medical system. "I know how taxed people in the health care

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The new start

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**Retired health professionals
making a difference**

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The questions of developmental editing

Is the argument clear?

Is the logic logical?

Does the structure make sense?

Could transitions be better?

Is there enough research, or too much evidence?

Are the sources solid, too many or too few?

Is the style too formal, or too casual?

Has the writer skimmed the surface or gone appropriately deep?

Does it open well? Close well? Is the lede buried?

Is the writer being brave?

The big question.



How can this good piece
become a great piece?

The mechanics of developmental editing

Print it out

Leave it alone for a few days, if you can

Revisit it

Consult and collaborate

Track changes

Comments

Samples

Offer support

Listen to the writer's ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Clear direction and encouragement

Thank you for trusting me.

How to get better at developmental editing

Read well and widely.

Do article autopsies.

Ask writers what works for them best in the editing process.

Practice makes better.

Revision is Reseeing

We work with our writers to share a vision for how their work can be even better.

