

How one small church staff strengthened trust, communication, and collaboration using the Team Dynamics Snapshot



Our Savior's Lutheran Church
West Bend, Wisconsin

The Organization: Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Our Savior's is a vibrant faith community led by a tight-knit, 3-person staff: Pastor Jim, Heather (Faith Formation Lead), and Kelly (Office Administrator). While their connection as colleagues was positive, their team communication had become surface-level and polite, rather than open and honest.

"We genuinely like working together," said Pastor Jim. "But we had a habit of saying 'I'm fine' when we weren't. And I wasn't sure how to break that cycle in a safe, productive way."

That's when a church member recommended the Team Dynamics Snapshot.



The Challenge

Like many small teams, Our Savior's staff wore multiple hats and managed a variety of overlapping responsibilities. But despite being dependable and mission-driven, there were unspoken dynamics holding the team back from fully thriving:

- Conversations stayed at a surface level, even when stress was high.
- Staff hesitated to speak up due to fear of being misunderstood or blamed.
- Past negative experiences in other workplaces made some team members wary of anything that felt like a "performance review."

"We had a pattern of saying 'I'm fine' but we weren't always fine," said Pastor Jim. "Because that's just the standard response, that's not a healthy way for a team to grow and to function. I knew we needed a healthier way to name what was really going on without people feeling like they were in trouble."



The Solution: The Team Dynamics Snapshot

That's when Pastor Jim decided to partner with Darcy Luoma Coaching & Consulting to try the **Team Dynamics Snapshot**—a guided process designed to help teams assess their current dynamics and strengthen trust, communication, and collaboration.

The process included:

- An **anonymous team survey** to gather candid insights
- A **90-minute Discovery Session** facilitated by certified coach, Jill Mueller
- A **customized Performance Playbook** with concrete recommendations
- A **1:1 Strategy Debrief** with Pastor Jim to support long-term implementation

What made the biggest difference? Jill's approach.

“The team was nervous at first. They were afraid it would be a performance review. But Jill immediately put everyone at ease. She created an affirming, respectful space where people felt safe to be honest.”

— Pastor Jim Hearne

A key turning point came when the team unanimously identified **“trustworthiness”** as a shared value. Jill validated that this was not only rare, but also a powerful foundation they could build on.

The Results

The changes were immediate and lasting. The team successfully...

- Replaced vague check-ins with a **1-10 scale** to track weekly stress and workload
- Added a **“word of the moment”** to express emotions with more nuance
- Adopted **new language** to signal when someone needs extra support
- Shifted from a hierarchical model to a **more unified, collaborative team dynamic**

Team members described the experience as:

“Fun, thought-provoking, and a great learning process. I think it is a great program for an office of three to an office of three hundred!”

— Kelly, Office Administrator

“I enjoyed the experience and found it to be very helpful. The information learned about each other improves the way we work together on tasks each day.”

— Heather, Faith Formation Lead

For Pastor Jim, the Snapshot wasn't just a one-time boost, it was a mindset shift in how he leads.

“Having Jill's calming, reflective presence affirming us in what we've been doing well and how we grow that together and the gifts that each of us bring to that, I think that was really the turning point.”

Key Takeaways + Inspiration

What Other Leaders Can Learn

- **Small teams (and large) will benefit.** The snapshot will lead to increased trust and alignment.
- **Structured support helps.** Even well-meaning teams may need a nudge to go beyond surface-level communication.
- **Facilitation matters.** Jill's affirming, skilled presence was key to success.
- **This isn't a one-and-done.** Pastor Jim is already working on follow-ups and benchmarks for the year ahead.

Final Thoughts from Pastor Jim



“My simple advice is, do it. **Do it.** It's going to benefit the team. It's going to benefit the supervisory role, the leader, the pastor, the manager. It's going to help and it's going to have a ripple effect in so many ways, ways that you won't even see, well into the future.”

Ready to realign and re-energize your team?

The Team Dynamics Snapshot gives you a clear, real-time view of how your team is doing and how to move forward together.

Schedule a call to learn more

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