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From Empty Pews to Packed Events: One Bible Study Group Sparks a Church Revolution

Leads to an Innovative Software Tool Matching Spiritual Gifts to Ministry Needs

Grand Prairie, Texas – Self-taught software-as-a-service developer, Stuart Matthews of Grand Prairie has a knack for matching technology to customer needs.

Early in his career, Matthews matched international companies with heavy equipment used for construction and mining operations. Business was growing and expanding. Sales driven by Internet technology that Matthews built were nearing \$35 million. But 9-11 put a halt to many industries in the U.S., including the company that Matthews and his partners founded.

Fast forward to February 2024. Matthews watches a movement unfold at his hometown church, First Baptist in Grand Prairie, where he sees an opportunity to automate the matching of spiritual gifts to ministry needs.

A small group of Christian friends were wrapping up a study on spiritual gifts. They completed a spiritual gifts survey where each member identified their primary gift. Matthews facilitated the study and asked members to identify two ministry needs in their church that hadn't returned after the pandemic and consider which spiritual gifts could meet those needs.

In that final session, a member gifted in wisdom and another in administration stepped up to restart a dormant adult Sunday school class. Then a group of women — equipped with gifts of leadership, administration, service, faith and exhortation — made a commitment to resurrect the women's ministry, which had gone completely silent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For church member Carolee Hall that moment was deeply personal.

"Before the spiritual gift study, I felt I was going through the motions of life. I wasn't contributing much of anything," Hall said.

"God told me He wanted me to start a lady's ministry at our church. We argued back and forth — He didn't, but I did. I convinced myself I wasn't spiritual enough to start a ministry. I was afraid of failure, rejection, and disappointing God," Hall said. "God told me to trust Him."

The result was a women's ministry called LOFT — Ladies of First Together. The ministry was born directly from one woman's willingness to say yes to her gift.

Within months, the LOFT team had reorganized the ministry, planned a full event with a guest speaker, coordinated ticket sales, and brought together more than 100 women for the occasion. Since then, they have hosted two out-of-town retreats and two additional afternoon events — ministering to hundreds of attendees.

As Matthews considered the full scope of the Bible study, he saw members engage the gifts they were given. While observing this group of ladies thrive in their service to the church, he envisioned building a software that could help other churches in matching gifts to ministry needs.

“As the small group reflected on what they had witnessed — members identifying needs, matching gifts to those needs and filling gaps almost instantly — a larger pattern came into focus,” Matthews said. “Serving on their church's personnel committee, I heard minister after minister describe the same exhausting struggle: not enough volunteers, not enough help, not enough people stepping into the places where they were most needed.

“The disconnect was undeniable to me as I observed how these women connected their gifts to our church's needs,” Matthews said. “Our church had ministry needs. Members had spiritual gifts and were willing to serve. But there was no system that easily connected the three.”

Until now.

The revelation of gifts that Matthews observed in his church became the foundation of GiftMatch360 — a platform he designed to bridge the gap between a church's ministry needs and its members' spiritual gifts.

“In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, churches across the country faced a quiet crisis,” Matthews said. “Ministries that once thrived sat dormant. Volunteer rosters ran thin. Adult Sunday school classes and women's ministries — cornerstones of congregational life — had simply stopped. Leaders were stretched. Pews were emptier than anyone wanted to admit.

“With GiftMatch360, churches can identify what gifts are best suited to operate a ministry opportunity and connect members in opportunities where they are uniquely equipped to serve,” he said.

Churches interested in GiftMatch360, can visit www.GiftMatch360.com/lookhttps://giftmatch360.com/how-it-works for more information.

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About GiftMatch360

GiftMatch360 is a ministry connection platform that helps churches match member spiritual gifts with active ministry needs, restoring engagement, rebuilding volunteerism and empowering congregations to thrive. For more information, visit giftmatch360.com.