

# 4 blessed events in just one day for Stark couple

• Married since 1989, the Cliffords suddenly have a very big family

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Be careful what you ask or pray for. You might get it — and more.

That's what happened yesterday to Stark County ministers Steven and Cheryl Clifford. The 48-year-old Christian education director at First United Methodist Church in Canton gave birth to quadruplets at Akron City Hospital — about eight weeks ahead of schedule.

The births are the first for the Jackson Township couple. They were married six years ago after being introduced at a denominational gathering.

Steven Clifford called the births, which he witnessed, "incredible and fascinating — a miracle."

The new mother was in stable condition yesterday but not ready to meet the media, who gathered around the still stunned father and

Heidi Lynn Clifford holds onto her father's finger shortly after her birth yesterday at Akron City Hospital. Heidi is one of four babies born to Cheryl and Steven Clifford of Stark County, who are both ministers.



MIKE CARDEW/Beacon Journal

three of the babies in their incubators.

Paul, Ruth Marie, Heidi Lynn and Robert were delivered by Caesarean section between 2 and 2:03 p.m.

The largest child, Paul, who weighed 3 pounds, 10 ounces, was in critical condition at Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron, where he was transferred shortly

after birth because of respiratory problems.

Ruth Marie, born at 2 p.m. and named for both grandmothers, was the smallest at 2 pounds, 13 ounces. Heidi Lynn, who weighed 3 pounds, 6 ounces, was named for Cheryl's sister. Robert was the youngest and weighed 3 pounds.

Steven Clifford said it was evident by "by the look of joy on her

face when they brought Ruth and then Paul into the recovery room that motherhood is wonderful."

The three babies at City Hospital are expected to go home in three to five weeks, according to registered nurse Debbie Seiber.

"We've had thousands praying for us and we've had a great deal

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## BABES

• Quadruplets will live in five-bedroom house

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of help from the Stark County Mothers of Twins club, who have far more experience than us," said Steven Clifford, who is between church assignments while operating his Belden Village tax and accounting business geared toward ministers and their churches.

The Cliffords talked about having a child about a year after their wedding during a drive home from Connecticut, where they had visited Cheryl Clifford's family.

Eggs from Cheryl's sister Heidi

Kuchta, 28, were implanted in Cheryl in March through in vitro fertilization at Akron City Hospital. The babies are the fourth set of quadruplets at the hospital in the last five years.

For the last 2½ months, volunteers have brought meals for Cheryl Clifford while she rested in bed. The Cliffords have a five-bedroom home, and just last month Cheryl's mother moved in to help

out. Clifford said his wife's age was never considered when they learned it was possible for them to have a child.

"She was in excellent health, and we never joked about her becoming pregnant," he said. "We both realized we were comfortable having married, and one child would be a blessing. We never dreamed of four."