

Quadruplets raise church membership

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CANTON — The folks at First United Church of Christ are talking about the sudden jump in membership.

The church got four new members in just three minutes Wednesday thanks to the Revs. Cheryl and Steven Clifford of Jackson Township. Cheryl gave birth to quadruplets.

The joyous occasion brought smiles to everyone at First United.

"I was kind of teasing this morning, saying we can't expect to have that kind of growth everyday," said Linda Parsons, choir director.

Word of the births of the two boys and two girls at Akron City Hospital spread quickly. All weighed between 2 pounds 13 ounces and 3 pounds 10 ounces, generous weights considering they are quadruplets, she said.

"We're really excited. It's wonderful. They're a neat couple," she said. "We've been praying a lot for them. We fig-

ured it was the best thing to do."

Cheryl Clifford, 48, serves as Christian education director at the Tuscarawas Street E church. Steven, 42, operates a tax consulting service for ministers.

The couple used invitro fertilization, where eggs are fertilized outside the body and implanted in the woman. Cheryl's sister from Connecticut donated the eggs.

Four were implanted and the couple beat the odds with four babies. Cheryl had been bedridden for weeks and eating every two hours to get enough nutrition. The babies were born eight weeks premature.

Steven said of the birthing experience, "It was just fantastic."

He added that during the birth, he held his wife's hand with one hand and took photos with the other.

All the babies were doing better than usually expected, he said.

One boy, Paul, was taken to Children's Medical Center of Akron because one lung was not fully developed, Parsons said. The boy is listed in serious condition.

The other three — named Robert, Ruth and Heidi — are listed in satisfactory condition at Akron City Hospital.

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