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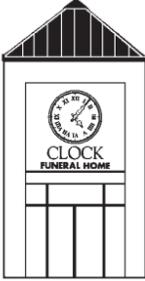
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New Associate Pastor at UCC

Submitted by Heidi Tice

Fruitport Congregational United Church of Christ commissioned their new Associate Pastor Dr. Donna Rick. Dr. Rick is a dentist and has her practice in Fruitport. She has devoted her life to the Lord and was drawn to Fruitport UCC in the fall of 2013.

Associate Pastor Rick hopes to bring new growth to the church through her small group approaches and wants to have a greater role in ministry of the church. She will be preaching monthly, presiding over weddings and helping with the serving of the sacraments.

The entire congregation welcomed Pastor Donna Rick and her family in a recognition and commission ceremony during their worship service March 16, 2014.

To hear some of the sermons already given by Pastor Rick you can visit the church's website at fruitportucc.org. Under the media tab/sermon you will find the sermons.

Advent year 'round

by Donna Rick

Associate Pastor, Fruitport Congregational Church

Advent is defined as the coming of someone or something extremely important. So as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, one who was obviously important, we remember Him coming to Earth. As if that isn't enough, we also need to keep in the forefront of our mind the second coming of Christ. We, like John the Baptist, should be preparing the way for the coming of the Lord. You may ask, "How can I do such a thing to save myself and others from the unquenchable fire, which was John's mission?" It starts with your heart. We must prepare our hearts for the coming of the King if we are to do anything at all.

It's one thing to say that Jesus is born in a stable in the town of Bethlehem, but it's another to say that Jesus is born in you. That Christ actually lives in you, in your heart. That Jesus Christ has become a part of you and you would make your heart His Bethlehem. How can we do that?

Think of it this way. If you knew you were having an important guest come to stay, actually live, at your home, how would you prepare your house? My guess is you would clean house. You would declutter and throw away things you do not want them to see. Sure, you could hide them, but what if they open that closet door or drawer and discover them? You would make sure things are clean and tidy, would you not? So why do we not do the same in preparation for the coming of Jesus? We need to clean our heart; rid it of the dirt, the sin, and all that is not of God. Fear, shame, and guilt should encourage you to clean more thoroughly. Would you want Christ to see the unforgiveness, the bitterness, or the resentment? And what about the clutter in our heart? Our unwillingness to reconcile with the irreconcilable? Our unwillingness to love the unloveable? It is only after cleaning out our hearts that we can make it the birthplace of Christ.

I am encouraged by Mary's willingness to mother Jesus. How different are we than Mary? Each one of us has the choice to invite Christ to be born in us as well. Will you offer to make your heart His Bethlehem? Just as Mary carried Jesus in her and gave birth to Him, so too, do you have the ability to allow Jesus to be born in you, in your heart. And our hearts, our humble dwelling place, are made worthy by His grace. Like Mary, who allowed Christ to enter the world through her, we too have that same gift. For when Christ is born in us we take Him into the world where we go and bear fruit, like John, preparing the way of the Lord; giving knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of sins; being light in the darkness and shadow of death; guiding our feet into the way of peace. Living our life in preparation for Christ's return means advent year 'round. Will you be like John and prepare the way of the Lord? Will you be like Mary and make your heart His Bethlehem? Will you too birth Christ into the world to help save people from the unquenchable fire? •

Our apologies!

In our October issue, we mis-spelled the name of the new baby born to the Field family. His name is Grey Adohay Field. He was born on February 24, 2013. His parents are Danielle Field and Rodney Mills.



Andrew Robert Olree (Drew) arrived on April 6, 2014 and weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. His very proud parents are Nathaniel "Nate" and Karen Olree. Karen (Elliott) is a Fruitport graduate and Nate grew up in Coopersville. They reside in Grandville.



Commentary by Mariann Cooper

Are you ready?

If the Lord comes tomorrow, or next year, or 100 years from now when you're dead and buried — are you ready?

He is coming again whether you believe it or not. When He comes will you know Him, or better still ~ will He know you?

The time to get to know God is now. You won't get the opportunity when you're dead. There is a Heaven and there is a Hell. According to the oldest book in history, Heaven is a place of love, peace and joyful praising of our Heavenly Father. Hell is described as a lonely place where you will feel burning pain and persecution and there will be no time limit, it's forever. No matter how much begging and pleading for mercy, you won't be rescued.

This poem sums it up:

"I'd rather live my life believing there is a Heaven, and find out there isn't when I die, than to live my life believing there is NO Heaven, and finding out there IS when I die." (Author unknown)

God loves everyone and wants all of us to go to Heaven with Him, but we have to make a choice to follow Him. Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father, except through me." Because we are born into sin, we need to accept that Jesus died for our sins, no matter how big or small. All though the Bible, it tells of the great believers in God, and then as generations pass, more and more people turn towards their self-gratification. They forget about God, they worship other Gods (money, fame, self, etc.), commit murder (and abortion), illicit sex and pornography, steal, and basically ignore the Ten Commandments.

We all have a sinful nature, and without God's help, we are weak and influenced. America is losing the favor of God and we and our children will pay the price for it!

Many people say and believe they are Christians, but sill justify their sins – everybody else does it, or, a little won't hurt, or, I deserve it, etc. Where will you stand when you face God? You're either hot or cold, there is no warm when it comes to judgment.

When you accept that Jesus died in your place for your sins, and know that he rose again on the third day and conquered death, he will give you a new heart if you want him to. This new heart will desire to know Him better and you will hunger for more knowledge of Him. His Spirit will live in you and guide you through life in a peaceful, loving, and caring manner.

What I'm sharing with you comes from God's Word. Won't you get to know Him today? Read your Bible and attend a Bible-believing church regularly.