

the **Tribune** Detroit Lakes



Photos by Michael Achterling / Tribune  
Larry Backlund prays in front of Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church before the last piece of the new 35-foot church steeple is installed. The church received the steeple as a gift from Backlund, a hometown parishioner.

# STEEPLE REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Donor makes addition to Lake Eunice church possible

By Michael Achterling  
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Onlookers sang church hymns. Through tears of joy, a retired church builder finished his last project.

And, the white spire, now fully secured atop the 77-year-old building, stands ready to welcome its community.

The Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church installed its new

The final piece of a new 35-foot church steeple, the spire, is hoisted into position for installation. Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church received the steeple as a gift from a hometown parishioner.

35-foot-tall church steeple with the help of church members and community volunteers Thursday, Sep. 24.

The steeple was a \$14,000 gift to the church from a lifelong man of faith, Larry Backlund, who wanted to give something back to his hometown parish, where he first learned the importance of being in service of others.

“There are so many emotions, just joy in seeing it, and a sense of that it looks like it’s been there forever and was intended to be there,” Backlund said. “I realized that there is something about a steeple that almost forces your eyes to lift up towards heaven.”

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# A quarter of Becker County voters already have ballots

What you need to know about voting

By Nathan Bowe  
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Before the courthouse even opened on Friday, Sept. 18, people were lined up to vote absentee in the general election — and things haven’t slowed down much since, said Becker County Auditor-Treasurer Mary Hendrickson.

How eager are people to vote this year? “On Friday (Sept. 18) at 7:45 a.m., we had a run (on the office)” she said. “The building doesn’t even open until 8 a.m., but the (security) screeners were here, we were here, so we let them in,” she said.

As of Thursday, Sept. 24, the county had already sent out about 5,000 ballots, an impressive start for the 19,761 registered voters in Becker County.

About 3,000 of those ballots were mailed out routinely to voters in the county’s 15 precincts that vote



Nathan Bowe / Tribune

The voting season is underway, and the former commissioners meeting room on the second floor of the Becker County Courthouse now holds absentee ballot voting booths and is headquarters to these three temporary election workers.

only by mail-in ballot, and the other 2,000 went to people wanting to vote absentee, Hendrickson said.

“So almost a quarter of registered voters in the county have had ballots mailed out to them,” Hendrickson

said Thursday.

Her office is averaging 40 absentee ballot requests a day, twice the usual number, she said.

**VOTING:** Page A6



# Get ready to scream

Becker County Museum planning scarier haunted house this year

By Vicki Gerdes  
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The Becker County Museum is in the midst of relaunching a public campaign to raise funds for its new building — and in honor of Halloween, the museum staff decided to make their first fundraising event of the fall into a haunted house tour.

Co-hosted by Midwest Paranormal Files — a local paranormal investigation group that has nine years of experience in staging haunted house events around the lakes area — the Haunted House Tours will be held inside the 4-H exhibit building at the Becker County Fairgrounds this year.

“We needed more space,” says museum director Becky Mitchell, due to physical distancing requirements imposed by the Minnesota Department of Health

**HAUNTED:** Page A6

# Distance learning more structured this year, DL school leaders say

By Marie Johnson  
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Educators had more time to plan for distance learning this fall than they did last spring, and local school leaders say that as a result, today’s distance learning program provides a more effective educational experience.

There’s a better-defined structure to online students’

school days now, they say, and more real-time virtual instruction than before. Greater opportunities for synchronous (live-stream) interactions with their teachers and peers help students feel connected and engaged, and make their days at home more closely resemble the traditional, in-person classroom experience.

“After last year, we saw that we wanted a little more live (online) interaction with teachers, because we know that those relationships are critical,” said Renee Kerzman, director of curriculum, instruction and technology for Detroit Lakes Public Schools. “So we made that a priority this year.”

“We’re trying to be systematic

in our approach,” she added. “It’s much more structured this year, that’s the big change.”

The Detroit Lakes School District first offered distance learning March 30, after a statewide order was enacted to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Schools closed March 17, and teachers had less than two weeks to design and implement an

entirely new online-only curriculum.

The general consensus of school officials, teachers, students and families at the end of last school year was that things went better than expected, but were not ideal. It was more of an emergency learning situation then.

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**INSIDE** Vaccination season

Local clinic advocate for shots  
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Four straight wins

Swimmers score season-best point total  
Page B1

**Forecast**

TODAY PM showers	MONDAY Mostly cloudy	TUESDAY Mostly cloudy	WEDNESDAY Partly cloudy	THURSDAY Partly cloudy
High: 57 Low: 44	High: 50 Low: 44	High: 60 Low: 45	High: 52 Low: 38	High: 47 Low: 34

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- Tessa, Ethos Hospice Chaplain







Photos by Michael Achterling / Tribune  
Volunteers assemble two parts of a 35-foot church steeple. Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church received the steeple as a gift from a hometown parishioner.



The two-part base of a new 35-foot church steeple is hoisted onto an existing church tower.



The final piece of a new 35-foot church steeple, the spire, is hoisted into position for installation.

## STEEPLE

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The installation was the culmination of a six-month process and, Backlund said, exceeded his own expectations.

“To see (the church member’s) excitement, and their vision ... they’ve had a lot of work and a lot of expense to prepare for this day of putting the steeple up there,” said Backlund. “It totally changes the look and feel (of the church).”

During the installation, Backlund led the nearly two-dozen onlookers in prayer before the final tower-piece was raised.

“We stand back in awe of this date, not in awe of a steeple ... but we stand back in awe of you,” said Backlund. “And so we stand before you today to say thank you. To say thank you for all that you have done for us.”

Ron Anderson, a retired church builder and project leader, said he’s been apart of more than 100 church projects, but this last one means more than he was prepared for, and began to cry.

Anderson said: “It’s my last one. When I look up there, I see the Lord. And, it won’t be long, before it’s face-to-face. I’m 78, how many years do you got left? I don’t know. I didn’t expect to do this,



Onlookers view the completed installation of Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church’s new 35-foot steeple. The church received the steeple as a gift from a hometown parishioner.

but he allowed me to do it.”

From start to finish, the installation only lasted about three hours. Anderson said he never

liked things that “take a long time.”

Once lighting is installed for the steeple, Dale Robins, a pastor at Lake Eunice Evangelical

Free Church, said he hopes it will serve as beacon in the community to attract new church members.

“I’m pretty happy,”

said Robins. “That’s the best I can say. It worked out so well.”

Robins said the congregation is excited about their new church

tower and that steeples themselves are made to point to Christ, which he hopes the community sees as a welcoming invitation.



Ron Anderson, left, Larry Backlund, center, and Pastor Dale Robins pose in front of Lake Eunice Evangelical Free Church’s new 35-foot steeple. The church received the steeple as a gift from Backlund, a hometown parishioner.



Volunteers prepare to hoist the spire of the new 35-foot church steeple.

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