

Our Lady of Perpetual Help is (safely) back in business

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Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Glenview is firmly back in action.

The 101-year-old Catholic church and 91-year-old OLPH School have met the challenges of a pandemic with flexibility and a home-parish advantage — space.

“The way we’ve adapted since March 1 has been unbelievable. It’s a whole new world,” said Terry Luc, director of communications for OLPH Church.

It’s a world of drive-in Masses in which priests pontificate from a second-story deck above the church entrance at 1775 Grove St.

It’s a world of staggered school starts for student wellness checks, where an operations office that once housed four departments is now devoted to student health.

It seems to be working.

OLPH school, 1123 Church St., follows guidance of the Archdiocese of Chicago, which in July released its reopening plan that provided for full-time, in-school instruction using the cohort model. Before- and after-school programs also are being offered.

In an Aug. 3 YouTube video, OLPH Principal Amy Mills stressed the school is not offering a remote-learning option, though a few families

have opted for e-learning provided through the archdiocese.

Should worsening COVID-19 conditions mandate a return to remote learning, OLPH has done it before. When the pandemic struck Illinois schools in mid-March, OLPH teachers switched to remote learning essentially over the course of a weekend.

In the foreseeable future it’s full-go, albeit with masks, daily morning wellness checks and social distancing throughout. A “Warrior Warmup” Aug. 24-27 split first-through eighth-grade classes alphabetically before those students had a full day Friday. Preschool and kindergarten will have their own Warrior Warmup schedule.

OLPH’s advantage is that its approximately 750 preschool to eighth-grade students — about what was anticipated after a large class of eighth-graders graduated in the spring — can occupy 10 buildings on campus.

Sixth- through eighth-grades have their own building and will use three separate entrances. Preschool, kindergarten and third-, fourth- and fifth-grade classes each have their own buildings. First- and second-graders share one and each have their separate entrance.

The school will be a hub of activity — as it was on Aug. 15 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help church. On that day there was a special Mass, a funeral, two First Communions, a wedding and a drive-in Mass.

“It was an amazing day,” said Luc.

It’s been an eventful summer for the church.

Starting on July 4, OLPH has offered drive-in Masses on Saturdays, drawing up to 150 vehicles to hear sermons delivered from a second-floor deck above the church entrance.

Congregants may listen through their car radios or simply roll down their windows as a speaker system is used. Priests offer communion by visiting



COURTESY OF TERRY LUC

Father Larry Basbas delivers Communion at Our Lady of Perpetual Help while wearing a plastic shield as parishioners maintain social distancing.

each car, under strict COVID-19 protocol.

“People are really loving that,” Luc said of the drive-in Mass.

In addition to 8:30 a.m. weekday services in the church itself, Sunday services at 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. can serve 82 people due to social distancing. An additional 9:30 a.m. Sunday Mass in the church “Playdium,” which Luc described as a large gym, provides room for 140 parishioners.

Spots must be reserved for each service at SignUpGenius.com starting at the beginning of the month.

“Right now we’re real happy that all of our Mass offerings have maxed out, and we’re looking to offer another Mass in the Playdium,” Luc said.

The church has made much use of social media, YouTube and its own website, www.olphglenview.org, to

distribute information.

An Easter Mass drew 3,000 YouTube watchers nationwide, Luc said, and the worship guides typically passed out at services now go out via email.

“It’s really funny when you see all these people with their phones in church, following their worship guides,” said Luc, who issues a daily “e-blast” to parishioners after doing it weekly pre-COVID.

Like everything with this pandemic, OLPH was uncertain how flexible members would be in accepting these adaptations. Their embrace of them means OLPH will continue offering things such as livestreamed Masses even after society returns to something approximating normalcy.

“A lot of changes that we’ve made are going to be permanent changes,” Luc said, “and we thought they were just going to be temporary things.”



COURTESY OF TERRY LUC

Outdoor signage at the church entrance to Our Lady of Perpetual Help gives directions to parishioners.