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Grand Chapter of Maryland

May 16, 2021

COVID-19 Subordinate Chapter Guidelines

Difficult decisions and unusual adjustments are having to be made to honor the CDC Guidelines and the Governor Hogan's directive of social distancing to protect our members, ourselves, and our loved ones from COVID-19.

These official guidelines are **temporary** and not **permanent** instructions. As the Governor Hogan's Phases-In Guidelines are lifted, we will return to the specific instructions as set forth in our Constitution and Laws, Ritual, and the Book of Instruction.

*Members who feel uncomfortable or have concerns for their health and well-being should not attend meetings.

*Those who are in the high-risk group should not attend meetings until they have received both COVID-19 vaccine shots and are 14 days post second shot.

- All officers will sanitize their hands before entering the Chapter Room. Sanitizers are to be kept outside the Chapter Room, perhaps on the registration table. If a member leaves the Chapter Room, they must re-sanitize their hands before coming back into the Room. Gloves may be done away with if members choose to do so.

- If you've received both of your COVID-19 shots, you can remove your mask while attending an Eastern Star meeting when around others who have been vaccinated **IF** your county allows this ruling. If you have not been vaccinated, you must keep a CDC approved mask on that **completely covers your nose and mouth**. Face shields or ½ masks alone are not acceptable coverings. If you have received your vaccine and are still uncomfortable around others you may continue to wear your face mask when in the presence of others. **(Updated 16 May 2021)**

- Members are **not** to shake hands or give hugs.
- Refreshments may be service if social distancing can be maintained by the members.

***Chapter Room Set-Up.** The following are required for the Chapter Room set-up: Altar in the center of the Chapter Room; Bible on the Altar; Pedestals at the Star Point stations with emblems; Signet; Charter; and the American Flag. Offering containers will be located at the Chapter Room door. Offering and “Good News” donations will be placed in these baskets prior to the meeting. If a Chapter entertains “Sunshine” or “Good News”, members and officers will stand and share their “Good News” at their seats or stations. **The officers will not wear their badges during the COVID-19 crisis.**

- No marching in or forming the hollow square. Chapters are permitted to open in short form if the Worthy Matron deems this necessary. All members will enter the Chapter Room informally and assume their stations or sitting on the sidelines, continuing to follow the six feet social distancing. If Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron are husband and wife, they may remain in the East. The same is applicable for the Associate Matron and Associate Patron. If the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron are not husband and wife, and if there is no dais in the East, then both chairs should be placed six feet apart. If the Chapter cannot accommodate both in the East, then the Worthy Patron will be seated somewhere on the South side of the room six feet from the Secretary’s and Marshal’s stations. The same will apply to the Associate Patron in the West, who will be seated six feet from any officer or member. All other Chapter officers are also to be six feet from other Chapter officers’ stations. If this cannot be done, then those that need to be moved to the sidelines will do so.

- It has been proven that singing has a higher risk potential for spreading the virus. Even with the protection of masks, a droplet could escape the mask. So, for the Opening Ode and Closing Ode, the organist may play those tunes, but the members will not sing. The organist will play the National Anthem; the members will **not** sing.

- **Escorting and Introductions.** These traditions are not an essential activity of our Order. If you wish to introduce someone, then introduce them from where they are seated. It is acceptable to give Grand Honors to those entitled to receive them from where they are introduced. Only those officers entitled to Grand Honors will be wrapped up (WGM/WGP, GGC Officers, GGCCM, PGM/PGP) All else will remain seated and given a hearty welcome. **(Updated 16 May 2021)**

Opening and Closing the Bible. To maintain social distance in our chapters I am requesting that the Conductress enter the labyrinth as usual; opens the bible reverently and after she is finished, returns to her station in the usual manner. She should not wait at the edge of the labyrinth for the Chaplain to pray. **(New addition May 16, 2021)**

- **Praying at the Altar.** The Chaplain will enter the labyrinth in the usual manner, remain standing and when she finishes the prayer, returns to her station in the usual manner. She does not wait for the conductress to close the bible during the closing ceremony. **(New addition May 16, 2021)**

Balloting. It is recommended that the ballot box be placed on the Altar for balloting. If the ballot box is carried by the Associate Conductress to voting members, she must extend the ballot box toward the member as far as is comfortably possible to maintain social distancing. Those handling the ballot box and those casting their ballot should protect the safety of all members by using hand sanitizer.

- **Modify Election.** Elect together, e.g. Worthy Matron and Conductress being elected, "I nominate Sister Jane Doe as Worthy Matron and Sister Mary Doe as Conductress for the 2020-2021 Chapter year. I further move that nominations be closed and that Brother John Doe cast the unanimous vote of the Chapter." Brother John casts the vote. The election has concluded.

- **Modify Initiation.** Follow the guideline set for by our MWGM Sister Marianne Shenefelt.

- **50-year Recognition.** Members who are to receive the 50-year certificate/pin will be instructed to follow the Conductress who will lead the recipient into the Altar where she/he is introduced then led to the East. If there is sufficient room on the dais to be social distancing, the recipient may assume the dais. If not, she/he will remain in front of the dais. The Worthy Matron will present the certificate and may pin the pin on the recipient if that person is comfortable with it or may just give the person the pin. Grand Honors are given. If the person is unable to walk around the room without assistance, the Worthy Matron can go to that person and present the certificate/pin and give the Grand Honors at their seat.