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Grand Chapter of Maryland

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### **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 it is considered safe by health experts to do so. This group includes members aged 65 years and older; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well-controlled including chronic lung diseases, serious heart conditions, diabetes, liver disease, and members who are immunocompromised.

- 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.

- Masks and/or face shield guards are to be worn at **all** times within the Chapter Room. Use of masks in other areas of your meeting's location may be waived as long as social distancing can be done.

- Members are **not** to shake hands or give hugs.
- There will be no refreshment period before or after the meeting.

**\*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. All members will enter the Chapter Room informally and assume their stations or sitting on the sidelines, continuing to follow the six (6) 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 (6) 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 (6) 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 (6) feet from any officer or member. All other Chapter officers are also to be six (6) 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.

- **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 Installation.** There will be only one Installing Officer who will do the Installing Prayer, Obligation, and Proclamation all from the East. Only those officers assuming new stations will be installed. There will be no semicircle of chairs in the West. The Worthy Matron introduces the Installing Officer who goes to the East unescorted and receives the gavel. The Worthy Matron will assume her new station for installation (if taking one) along with other officers assuming their stations. Officers will take their Obligation from their station. The Installing Officer will begin with the Worthy Matron, who will stand at her station.

**Reminder, jewels and badges are not worn during this COVID-19 period.** Grand Honors will be given to **the** Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron if they have not been previously installed. All other officers will follow the same routine. After all are installed, the Installing Officer will do the Proclamation and then hand the gavel to the newly installed Worthy Matron who will seat the Chapter and proceed with Closing the Chapter.

- **Modify Initiation.** The basic initiatory work will be done with some changes. Instead of the Conductress leading the candidate around the Chapter Room on her arm, the Associate Conductress, after giving her charge, will instruct the candidate(s) to follow the Conductress around the room. The Associate Conductress stays in the West after the Conductress does her charge and then is seated at her station. The Conductress will give her charge to the candidate(s) and

then will lead her/him around to the Associate Matron in the West, then to behind Esther's chair for the address of the Worthy Matron. She will then lead her/him into the Altar and present the Bible to the candidate(s) who will assume the Obligation. Candidate(s) will **not** kneel at the Altar.

They will then leave the Altar and the Conductress will seat the candidate(s) in a chair(s) toward the East on the South side of the room. The candidate(s) will remain there until she/he is to sign the Bylaws. After seating the candidate, the Conductress will stand at her station and address her charge to each Star Point. Each Star Point will rise when addressed and give her lecture from her station, then place her emblem on the pedestal and be seated. The Prayer Circle when done: Worthy Patron calls up the Chapter, the only officer to move will be the Chaplain who will go to the Altar; Star Points turn toward the Altar and everyone assumes the reverent attitude while the Chaplain says her/his prayer. Afterwards, the Organist will play "Blest Be the Tie That Binds" but there will be no singing. The Chaplain will then return to her/his station. The Conductress will do her part with the Worthy Patron from her station in the South East. The candidate(s) remains seated. The grip will be explained by the Worthy Patron, but will not be given to the candidate(s) until it is safe to do so. When it is time, the candidate will be led to the Secretary's desk to sign the Bylaws, and then around the Chapter Room to be introduced from the East facing West, and then seated on the sidelines.

- **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.