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General Grand Chapter

Order of the Eastern Star™
Established November 1876

TO BE SHARED WITH OES MEMBERSHIP

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My Sisters and Brothers,

I want to thank you for your continuing efforts and dedication to our Order. We've made adjustments and done our best to take these new, perplexing times in stride. Now that some national and local governments have partially lifted Covid-19 restrictions and the WGMs and Deputies in these areas have given permission to return to in-person Chapter meetings, I would like to provide you with the following information.

Masks. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) states: "Masks are recommended as a simple barrier to help prevent respiratory droplets from traveling into the air and onto other people when the person wearing the mask coughs, sneezes, talks, or raises their voice. This is called source control. This recommendation is based on what we know about the role respiratory droplets play in the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, paired with emerging evidence from clinical and laboratory studies that shows masks reduce the spray of droplets when worn over the nose and mouth. COVID-19 spreads mainly among people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet), so the use of masks is particularly important in settings where people are close to each other or where social distancing is difficult to maintain." (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>)

MWGM Instruction. It is my official instruction to the Grand Jurisdictions and Subordinate Chapters directly under the General Grand Chapter that face masks shall be worn in our Chapter Rooms to protect the health and safety of all members and visitors. This instruction shall be in effect until further notice. The virus does not care about all the hullabaloo about wearing a mask, it's just looking for a place to live and thrive. We're going to do our best not let it find its new home with an Eastern Star member!

Initiation. In-person meetings may make it possible for the ceremony of Initiation to be held, which is acceptable. There is no abridged form of initiation. The candidate(s) must be given the full ceremony as prescribed in the Ritual. The candidate(s) must be informed that their initiation is a ceremony where some brief contact may occur and physical distancing is not always possible, and face masks will be worn by all involved. It is our responsibility as their future Sisters and Brothers to explain this to them, followed by giving them the option of not being initiated at this time. The candidate(s) shall be directly

asked if they are comfortable being initiated under these circumstances. If their decision is "no," their decision shall be respected and their initiation scheduled for a later date. Additionally, if circumstances are such that there is any question whatsoever about the health and safety for all concerned, the ceremony of Initiation shall not be held.

Thank you again for all you are doing in the best way possible to support your Sisters and Brothers and our Order. These unsettling times are a challenge for everyone. Maya Angelou said, "Hope and fear cannot occupy the same space. Invite one to stay." Sisters and Brothers, I am so proud to know we are inviting HOPE to stay.

In friendship & love,

Marianne R. Shenefelt

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copy: Henry S. Martin, MWGP
Alma Bane, RWGS

