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**General Grand Chapter**  
Order of the Eastern Star™  
Established November 1876

January 19, 2021

TO: 2018-2021 Tri-Line (currently serving & upcoming); Grand Secretaries; and Deputies

I say farewell to 2020 and hello to 2021, my Sisters and Brothers! For the well-being of our Order, I believe it is necessary for Grand Chapters and Subordinate Chapters alike to move forward with their business, elections, installations, etc. I am aware there are challenges for doing this due to the various Covid restrictions, but I have every confidence that together we can figure it out. Attached to this letter are my guidelines "Moving Forward – 2021" and "Modified In-Person Open Installation Ceremony with Covid Restrictions," which were written with the intention of helping answer some of the inquiries I have received. Please understand I am not changing any of the requirements for joining the Order nor am I modifying any of the fundamental and foundational rules of the Ritual or the GGC Red Book with these guidelines.

I encourage you to do your best to follow your Jurisdiction's Constitution, Code of Laws, or similar source; however please realize it is entirely possible some of the rules may need to be *temporarily* adjusted in order to accomplish what needs to be done to move forward while adhering to the health and safety restrictions in your area. The time is coming when we will be able to get back to our regular ceremonies, etc., and once again we will have the pleasure of enjoying the comfort of familiarity. Hallelujah!

Forward into 2021! *"The perfect cure for worry is trust in God."* --unknown.

In friendship & love,

*Marianne R. Shenefelt*

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

## MOVING FORWARD - 2021

It is of the utmost importance that Jurisdictions and Subordinate Chapters alike move forward with their essential business such as elections, installations, etc., for 2021. Due to the restrictions in the duties and powers of the MWGM, it is not possible for me to become closely involved in the actual governance of a Grand Chapter or their Subordinate Chapters. I encourage you to follow your Constitution, Code of Laws, Law Book or similar source for your Jurisdiction as faithfully as possible and to do the best you can with fairness and loving kindness to your membership. In these unprecedented times, it may be necessary to move forward with the understanding it's possible none of the usual rules can be applied. The following information DOES NOT change any of the requirements for joining our Order or any of the other fundamental and foundational rules in the Ritual or the GGC Red Book.

- ◆ To the Leadership: Please realize the pandemic continues to be serious and is in full force. It may be necessary to make some practical and necessary adjustments to your Grand Chapter and/or Subordinate Chapter protocol/business in order for you to move forward. All possible effort should be taken to follow your Jurisdiction's Constitution and still obey health regulations, understanding that the health regulations imposed by your national and local governments override your Constitution. If there is a contradiction, lawful health regulations rule. Please be mindful of the fact that the unprecedented circumstances of the pandemic are not to be used as an excuse to ignore, disregard or abolish your Constitution.

### **GRAND CHAPTER SESSIONS - USING ZOOM OR OTHER VIDEO CONFERENCING METHODS**

**If your Grand Chapter Session is being held using Zoom or other means of video communication, you are directed NOT to perform any Ritualistic work whatsoever.** No portion of any of our established Ritualistic ceremonies from the Ritual are to be performed during a meeting using Zoom or other video conferencing method, with the exception of the previously authorized Abbreviated Installation using Zoom or other video conferencing methods, i.e., MWGM communications dated 4/6/20, 4/7/20 and 4/8/20, which states: *An "installation ceremony" must be performed that includes (at a minimum) the Installation Prayer, the Obligation of Officers and the Proclamation of the Officers being duly installed. These portions of the Installation Ceremony in the Ritual must be accomplished. It is okay to use a conference call or video conferencing to do this, but it cannot be accomplished in person in order to safeguard the health and safety of our members until the COVID-19 pandemic is over.\**

\*At this time, I would like to adjust the last statement in the above information; "...cannot be accomplished in person...until the COVID-19 pandemic is over" because some Jurisdictions are conducting in-person meetings with appropriate COVID-19 restrictions in place so it may be possible to hold in-person open Installations. If your Jurisdiction's WGM and supporting leadership and government health regulations allow for in-person meetings, it is acceptable to conduct a Modified In-Person Open Installation Ceremony with Covid restrictions. Please see the attached Guidelines for a Modified In-Person Open Installation Ceremony with Covid Restrictions for Subordinate Chapters and Grand Chapters (updated January 2021).

It may be necessary to adjust the structure of your Grand Chapter Session if you are using Zoom (or other video methods) to hold your Session. It may basically become a business meeting with the essential portions of your business being taken care of in accordance with your Constitution as closely as reasonably possible with adherence to Covid health and safety restrictions in your area. Out of necessity due to the pandemic, it will not be possible to have the usual protocol, traditions, ceremonies or formalities we are accustomed to for our Sessions.

## ELECTIONS

- ◆ ELECTRONIC BALLOTING. If your Jurisdiction has the expertise and technical support available to your membership to conduct confidential and secret balloting using Zoom or other video conferencing programs, this manner of voting can be used if your leadership is in agreement to do so. Please keep in mind you have a duty to ensure all who are entitled to vote are given the chance to vote.
- ◆ MAIL-IN BALLOTS. If your Jurisdiction is not holding in-person meetings, it is suggested you consider using mail-in ballots. It is possible this may be a better choice for your members to ensure all who are entitled to vote are given the opportunity to vote (not just those who have access and understand how to use Zoom or other video conferencing methods). The process for mail-in ballots would require time to discuss and choose a specific way of accomplishing this task such as preparation of the ballots, the actual mailing, setting a deadline for the return of the ballots, etc. Please take into consideration how you will handle nominations from the floor if you allow this type of nomination from members during your elections.
- ◆ ABBREVIATED IN-PERSON VOTING. This suggestion is courtesy of a kind and sharing Jurisdiction (thank you!) and is an acceptable alternative to mail-in ballots if in-person activity is allowed and your leadership is in agreement to use this method. Description: select a specific date and on that day have your Chapter Rooms open for a set time so that eligible voting members can come to the Chapter during that time and cast their ballot. The slate of Officers to be voted on could be sent to the members beforehand if desired. The official ballot would be given to them as they enter the Chapter Room. Members would mark their ballot, deposit it in the ballot box and leave (an “in” and “out” process). If desired and felt to be necessary, precautions such as signing in could be used. The preparations for the Abbreviated In-Person Voting protocol would need to be arranged prior to the voting day and the instructions discussed and presented clearly to the members well in advance. If this suggestion is used, please stay safe by wearing face masks, observing social distancing and restricting the size of attendance as necessary.

## RESOLUTIONS

The following information is my viewpoint regarding handling Resolutions and is an acceptable manner of handling them if the Jurisdiction leadership is in agreement to do so.

It is my opinion for Resolutions to be properly considered, discussed and voted on by the membership, it is necessary for this business to take place at an in-person Grand Chapter

Session. I believe this is especially true for major revision-type Resolutions, as well as Resolutions that may possibly be contentious. Body language, tone and the attention of those in the Grand Chapter Room are a part of conducting this important business. These components are not necessarily present on Zoom or other video conferencing methods. Additionally, the need for amendments could be complicated, as well as the need for secure and confidential voting if there is a call for a written ballot vote. Therefore, it is my opinion the membership would be better served if Resolutions were held over until they can be addressed in person at a Grand Chapter Session. Of course, it is possible there will be circumstances where this is not acceptable. Each Jurisdiction will need to address Resolutions in a manner that best serves their membership. Resolutions are the business of Jurisdictions.

Please understand the information in this communication is being provided with the intention of being supportive and useful. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
January 2021

**APPROPRIATE FOR IN-PERSON OPEN INSTALLATION CEREMONY  
FOR SUBORDINATE CHAPTERS AND GRAND CHAPTERS**

**Guidelines – In-person OES Installations with COVID-19  
Restrictions: Face Masks, Social Distancing, Limited Attendance  
These instructions are a temporary deviation from normal  
Eastern Star procedures due to the coronavirus pandemic**

I hereby issue the following *temporarily* modified guidelines for the Ritualistic Ceremony for conducting in-person open Installations adhering to COVID-19 restrictions. All participants are to wear face masks, maintain social distancing and attendance is to be limited as required by national and/or local health authorities. These modified Guidelines may be used by Subordinate Chapters and/or Grand Chapters wherever in-person meetings are allowed by national and local authorities and the Worthy Grand Matron. *The following instructions are not permanent.*

**Modified In-person Open Installation.** The Installation Ceremony language printed in the Ritual shall be used, adjusting wording as necessary to fit the circumstances (pages 98-126 or 127-151). The floor work shall be modified as follows in order to maintain social distancing. All participants will please wear face masks/coverings.

All Installing Officers shall be in their Stations six feet apart. The Installing Marshal will remain at her/his Station and invite the incoming Officers to enter the Chapter Room. The Officers will enter the Chapter Room carrying their badges and proceed to the Stations where they will be installed. It is possible their Stations will be on the sidelines six feet apart. When the Officers reach their Stations, they will be seated. The Installation Prayer will be given at the Altar or from the Installing Chaplain's Station. The Installing Marshal will read the roll of Officers to be installed. As their name is called, the Officer will stand at their Station and remain standing. All Officers remain standing and face the Altar to repeat the Obligation of Office given by the Installing Officer. The Officers will then be seated at their Stations.

The Worthy Matron-elect and the Worthy Patron-elect shall be seated in the Chapter Room wherever necessary to maintain social distancing. The Installing Officer shall direct the WM-elect to approach the Altar to be installed. At the Altar, she shall put on her badge when directed and then as directed proceed to the East or near East, whichever position maintains social distancing, to receive Grand Honors and be seated. The same procedure shall be used for the WP-elect.

All other Officers shall remain at their Stations, stand when addressed by the Installing Officer to receive their charge, put on their badge when directed and be seated.

At the end of the Ceremony, the Installing Officer shall direct the Installing Marshal to proclaim from her/his Station the Officers regularly installed.

If members and/or visitors are allowed to be present, strict adherence to the COVID-19 restrictions in your area shall be observed.

Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
UPDATED January 2021