

Chapter Meetings – Covid-19 Restrictions
MWGM Guidelines – May 2020

The following MWGM guidelines are not permanent. They shall be in effect until local and/or national health officials and governments lift the CDC restrictions relating to the coronavirus pandemic. Additionally, it would be desirable that members would express their confidence and comfort regarding their health and safety to attend a meeting before the decision is made to hold meetings.

- ☐ **It is strongly recommended each member wash their hands immediately after coming into the building to help stop the potential spread of the virus.**
- ☐ **It is highly suggested members wear face masks, maintain social distancing, and utilize proper hand sanitizing/washing.**
- ☐ **Members are not to shake hands or give hugs.**
- ☐ Members who are feeling ill must not attend meetings.
- ☐ 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. Those at high-risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are: people 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 disease or moderate to severe asthma; serious heart conditions; diabetes; chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis; liver disease; and people who are immunocompromised which includes cancer treatment, smoking, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, and prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications (source: [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/)).

Chapter Room Setup. The following are required for Chapter Room setup:

- Altar in the center of the Chapter Room
- Bible on the Altar
- Pedestals at the Star Point stations with emblems
- Signet
- American Flag

Please assign one or two people to set up the Chapter Room. If possible, it would be helpful to have the room set up in advance

Opening Chapter. During this time of unusual circumstances, it shall be acceptable for the Officers to enter the Chapter Room informally and take their stations. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for the Officers to be seated on the sidelines six feet apart, with the exception of the WM and those Officers whose stations are typically six feet from other members in the Chapter. **The six feet does not apply to those Officers who reside in the same household.**

Seating in the East. The WM and WP chairs shall be six feet apart. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for only the WM to be in the East and the WP to be seated at her left on the sidelines six feet from others.

Seating in the West. The AM and AP chairs shall be six feet apart. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for only the AM to be in the West and the AP to be seated at her left on the sidelines six feet from others.

Chapter Officers. The Chaplain and the Treasurer shall be seated six feet apart. The Marshal shall be seated six feet from the Secretary. The Warder shall be seated six feet from the West, next to the door and not next to the AM. In a small Chapter Room, it may be necessary for these Officers to sit on the sidelines six feet apart, except the Warder who shall be seated by the door six feet from others.

Speaking parts of Officers. If it is necessary for the Officers to be seated in their stations on the sidelines to maintain social distancing, they may stand and give their speaking parts from the sidelines.

Balloting. It is recommended the ballot box be placed on the Altar for balloting. Please ensure members use a hand sanitizer before approaching the Altar to cast their ballot. During these uncommon times, the AC should present the ballot box by extending it toward the voting member as far as comfortably possible to maintain social distancing. Those handling the balloting box and those casting their ballot should protect the safety of all members by using hand sanitizer. Associate Conductress to have hand sanitizer for all members Balloting.

Initiation. The ceremony of Initiation is essential to our Order, followed by being kind and loving to each other, and making our presence known in our communities by our charitable giving. The ceremony of Initiation is a portion of our Ritual where it is not possible to practice physical distancing. It is critical that every possible effort be made to protect the health and safety of our members and the candidate(s). All people involved shall wear face masks, observe proper hand cleanliness, and observe all other common-sense precautions to safeguard the health of all. Members shall not become lax in observing social distancing when and where it is possible during the ceremony of Initiation. The Chapter must inform the candidate(s) that their initiation is a ceremony where physical distancing is not possible. It is necessary, as well as right and proper, to explain this to them so they can be given the option of not being initiated at this time. It is recommended the candidate be directly asked if they feel comfortable being initiated knowing social distancing is not possible.

Escorting and Introductions. It is not possible to have extensive introductions and escorting and observe proper social distancing. These activities are not an essential activity of our Order because our existence does not depend on introductions and escorting. Reducing the ways people come in close contact with each other should be the goal for Chapter meetings at this time. Escorting does not meet these criteria. It is acceptable to introduce members from their places in the Chapter Room. It is acceptable to give Grand Honors to those entitled to receive them when they are introduced from their seats in the Chapter Room. At this time, it is not recommended to escort members for introduction.

My Sisters and Brothers, during these unprecedented times, it is of paramount importance that we keep the health and safety of all our members uppermost in our minds as we cautiously move forward. Thank you for being diligent about protecting them, yourself, and your loved ones.

Marianne R. Shenefelt
Most Worthy Grand Matron

Instructions – In-person OES Installations with Social Distancing
These instructions are a 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 Installations with social distancing. These modified instructions can be used wherever in-person meetings are allowed per Covid restrictions and the WGM. When the Covid restrictions have been lifted in your area and your WGM indicates you can meet in person, it is expected you will return to performing the entire Ceremony of Installation as directed in the Ritual. The following instructions are not permanent.

Modified In-person Installation. The Installation Ceremony language printed in the Ritual shall be used, adjusting wording as necessary to fit the circumstances (pages 98-126). The floor work shall be modified as follows in order to maintain social distancing: 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 (Ritual, page 126), the Installing Officer shall direct the Installing Marshal to proclaim, from her/his Station, the Officers regularly installed.

Marianne R. Shenefelt
Most Worthy Grand Matron
September 2020

IN ADDITION, HERE IN FLORIDA

These guidelines will remain in effect until such time as we are Covid free and all restrictions have been lifted.

Please dispense with all singing.
Star Point Rug not to be used.

INTRODUCTIONS – ALL introductions will be done from their places in the Chapter Room with Grand Honors being given to those entitled to receive them when they are introduced from their seats. The introductions will be done by the Worthy Matron only (Conductress will not be used).

DRAPING THE ALTAR - During the Draping of the Altar the Star Point Officers will need to be seated on the sideline. The Chaplain will need to step as far back away from the Altar as possible when the Bible is removed. The Conductress and Associate Conductress will need to open the drape, step back until they would be at least six feet from the Chaplain when they are at the Altar and then they assume the Reverent Attitude.

CLOSING – Marching out and or gathering around the Altar will be dispensed until all restrictions have been lifted. All may repeat the Mizpeh Benediction from their place in the Chapter Room.

Sisters and Brothers everyone knows these adjustments will be difficult however, we must do everything we can to ensure our members and visitors are safe and feel comfortable attending our meetings. As soon as all restrictions have been lifted, I will advise Chapters to return to our approved Ritual and Floorwork. As you can see from the guidelines of the Most Worthy Grand Matron “how we’ve always done it” must be set aside during this crisis if we are to be able to reopen our Chapters. The Past Grand Matrons and Past Grand Patrons over Proficiency in your District are available to help you with these adjustments and as always, I am only a phone call, text message, or email away!!