

*Grand Chapter of West Virginia
Order of the Eastern Star*



Organized June 28th 1904

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We hope you are staying well and exercising the necessary precautions that allow you to feel safe during these difficult and unprecedented times during this coronavirus pandemic. It has come to the point that some necessary and difficult decisions had to be considered by me for the protection and health of all our members. There being no guidelines to go by for this current situation and having to consider the age of the majority of our members whose health is the most at-risk for their lives, I decided to call the chairman of the jurisprudence committee for some guidance.

An informational discussion was held with the jurisprudence committee and the elected grand line officers along with the Worthy Grand Patron and myself was held this past Saturday, May 16, 2020. After much discussion and in the interest, welfare and safety of all our members, it was with the approval of all present that our Grand Chapter "Life's Treasures" Grand Chapter session, scheduled for October 1-3, 2020, be cancelled and held October 7-9, 2021 in Charleston, WV.

The current 2019-2020 elected and appointed Grand Officers and Trustees, Grand Chapter committees and all other appointments will remain in their current positions until the newly elected and appointed officers are installed at the 2021 Grand Chapter session, October 9, 2021.

All 2019-2020 elected and appointed officers will continue to serve for the 2020-2021 year with no election or installation of said officers. However, in the event that a Chapter has officers who plan to be elected to another station, then this can be done at your June meeting(s) using the modified election and installation instructions included with this letter. **IMPORTANT: All newly elected Officers must be installed by June 30, 2020.**

I realize that our elderly members who have been staying home for the last couple of months, even quarantining themselves away from their own family members, do not feel safe in returning to the chapter's meeting at this time causing some chapters to not have a quorum. In this case chapter secretaries and treasurers will continue to receive money, issue dues cards, and pay all necessary expenses and list in the minute book, "No meeting was held due to Covid-19 restrictions" for meeting not held.

The following is a list of up-coming events that have also been cancelled and will be rescheduled for the spring and summer of 2021: Ritual School, District School of Instruction, no requirements for subordinate schools of instruction although you may call on your Instructor or Deputy Instructor at any time if needed, Tri-State Luncheon August 1, 2020, and annual OES picnic August 23, 2020, due to mass gathering restrictions imposed by the governor.

Chapters that are submitting youth or ESTARL applications must have the seal of the chapter and Worthy Matron's signature on the forms and mailed to Fran Lemley, chm. of Education Committee, 387 Little Shannon Run Road, Mt. Morris, PA 14349 as soon as possible. The deadline is June 15, 2020. For those chapters that are not having a quorum, I will give the directive that the Worthy Matron is to secure approval from four of the elected line officers, to allow the chapter to submit the scholarship application.

Chairman of the Housing Committee will be returning your application form to those who have registered for a room for this October session.

Chairman of the Registration Committee will keep those who have registered for Grand Chapter session for this year and will extend the registration to cover next year's Grand Chapter session.

All banquet reservations will also be cancelled and checks will be returned to the members.

We were very saddened to have had to cancel all the Grand Visitations after March 14, 2020, as this left a void of not spending time with these chapters. Brother Steve Chapman, Worthy Grand Patron, and I look forward to spending time with your members and fulfilling our duties of checking the secretary's and treasurer's cash books. Therefore, I will be calling the Worthy Matron of those chapters whose Grand Visitations were cancelled to set a date for an informal meeting with their chapter sometime in June.

Continue to reach out to your sisters and brothers by sending cards, making phone calls or using other forms of social media during this period of social distancing until we meet again.

Star love,
Linda L. Fowler
Worthy Grand Matron

Difficult decisions and unusual adjustments are having to be made to honor the directive of social distancing. We hope that the suggestions and other information that is listed in this correspondence will be accepted for the best interests of our members. Remember that these are temporary and not permanent instructions. When the time comes that we feel safe, or a vaccine is available to the public, we will go back to our Ritual Work and all other instructions as set forth in our Constitution and Laws and the Book of Instruction.

- 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 in. Gloves may be done away with if members so choose to do so.
- Masks 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.
- No marching in or making the hollow square. **Chapters are permitted to open in short form.** All members will enter the chapter room informally and assume your station or sitting on the sidelines, still following 6 ft. social distancing. If Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron are husband and wife, they may remain in the east. The same is true for the Associate Matron and Associate Patron. If your Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron are not husband and wife, and if there is no dais in the east, then both chairs can be placed 6 ft. apart. If your chapter cannot accommodate both in the east, then the Worthy Patron needs to be seated somewhere on the south side of the room and distance 6 ft. from the secretary's and marshal's stations. The same will apply to the Associate Patron in the west who will be seated somewhere on the north side of the room and 6 ft. away from the warder's station if that station is on the north side of the room. All other chapter officers are also to be 6 ft. from other chapter officer's station. If this cannot be done, then those that need to be moved to the sidelines will do so.
- Escorting and introductions are not an essential activity of our order. If you want 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.
- It has been determined that singing has a higher risk potential for spreading the virus. Even with masks on 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. Same will go for the national anthem.
- Do 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 20-21 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 is over.
- Do 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 should remove their badges and leave them at the station before moving to another station. Officers will take their obligation from their station. The Installing Officer will begin with the Worthy

Matron who will stand at her station and place her own jewel on. Grand Honors will be given to the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron if he has 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.

- Do 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 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 and then will lead her 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 into the altar and present the Bible to the candidate who will assume the obligation. They will then leave the altar and the Conductress will seat the candidate in a chair toward the east on the south side of the room. The candidate will remain there until she is to sign the by-laws. After seating the candidate, the Conductress will stand at her station and address her charge to each star point. Each star point will arise when addressed and give her lecture, 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 then returns to her/his station and the Conductress will go to the east to do her part with the Worthy Patron. The candidate remains seated. The grip will be explained by the Worthy Patron but will not be given to the candidate until it is safe to do so. When it is time, the candidate will be led to the secretary's desk to sign the by-laws, and then around the chapter room to be introduced from the east facing west, and then seated on the sidelines.
- 50-year Pins. Members who are to receive the 50-year pin will be instructed to follow the Conductress who will lead the recipient into the altar where she is introduced then led to the east. If there is plenty of room on the dais to be social distancing the recipient may assume the dais. If not, she will remain in front of the dais. The Worthy Matron may pin the pin on the recipient if that person is comfortable about 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 pin and give the Grand Honors at their seat.
- There will be no refreshment period before or after the meetings during the 2020-2021 Chapter Year.