

**CHAPTER MEETINGS – COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS
MWGM GUIDELINES
WITH ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS/CLARIFICATION
FROM THE WORTHY GRAND MATRON**

May 2020

The Most Worthy Grand Matron states these 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, now is a good time to make advance/future plans for the changes that must take place so that our members will desire to attend meetings and feel confident and comfortable regarding their health and safety.

General Guidelines.

Members must wash their hands with sanitizing hand wash immediately after coming into the building to help stop the potential spread of the virus.

Members will wear face masks, maintain social distancing and utilize proper hand sanitizing/washing during social time and during the meeting.

Members are not to shake hands or give hugs.

Many chapters have a meal before the meeting or refreshments following the meeting. For the first two months after we begin meeting again, I ask that you refrain from having food. It is impossible to maintain social distancing when serving and sitting at a table in the dining room to eat. Within the two months, I will determine whether we can serve food again or extend the requirement for no food.

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 nursing homes or long-term care facilities, 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 Set-up.

The following are required for chapter room setup:

Charter

Altar in the center of the chapter room

Bible on the Altar

Pedestals at the Star Point stations with emblems

Signet

Ballot Box

American Flag

Marshal's stand and baton

The Worthy Matron will ensure that the Conductress and Associate Conductress sets up and removes the paraphernalia in the Chapter room. If they are unable to do so, the Worthy Matron should permanently appoint two (2) people to set up the room. The chapter room should be set up in advance of the meeting, preferably the day/evening before.

When setting up the chapter, the Conductress and Associate Conductress or others designated to set up the chapter room will make sure the United States flag is in proper position in the flag stand in the East.

Opening the Chapter.

During this time of unusual circumstances, the offices will enter the Chapter room and assume their stations informally. They will not march in.

All officers must maintain “social distancing” and remain six (6) feet apart. If your chapter room is small, it may be necessary for some of the officers to be seated on the sidelines, with the exception of the Worthy Matron and those officers whose stations are typically six (6) feet from other members in the chapter. If it is necessary to have an officer(s) seated on the sidelines, that seat should be reserved for the officer and other seats near blocked off to maintain the six (6) feet apart rule.

During the Opening and Closing of the chapter, the singing of the opening and closing odes may be omitted. If odes are sung, face masks are still required to be worn.

When taking up the love offering during the meeting, the Conductress and Associate Conductress will present the love offering plate by extending it toward the Sister or Brother as far as comfortably possible to maintain social distancing.

Seating in the East.

The Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron chairs shall be six (6) feet apart. When your chapter room is small, it may be necessary for only the Worthy Matron be in the East and the Worthy Patron to be seated at her left on the sidelines six (6) feet from others.

Seating in the West.

The Associate Matron and Associate Patron chairs shall be six (6) feet apart. When your chapter room is small, it may be necessary for only the Associate Matron be in the West and the Associate Patron to be seated at her left on the sidelines six (6) feet from others.

Chapter Officers.

The Chaplain and the Treasurer shall be seated six (6) feet apart. The Marshal shall be seated six (6) feet from the Secretary. The Warder shall be seated six (6) feet from the West, next to the door and not next to the Associate Matron. The Organist must be seated six (6) feet away from others also. In a small chapter room, it may be necessary for officers to sit on the sidelines six (6) feet apart, except the Warder who shall be seated at the door and the Organist at the instrument, but continuing to maintain the six (6) feet social distancing. If the Marshal is seated on the sideline the stand and baton will be place within her/his reach.

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 shall stand and give their speaking parts from the sidelines.

Balloting.

It is the desire of the Worthy Grand Matron that the ballot box be placed on the Altar for balloting when possible. Please ensure members use a hand sanitizer before approaching the Altar to cast their ballot. You may want to appoint someone to stand near the Associate Conductress near Ruth's station with the hand sanitizer. If the ballot box is passed to each member, please ensure that each member uses the hand sanitizer before casting their ballot. During these uncommon times, the Associate Conductress 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.

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 members 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(s) be directly asked if they feel comfortable being initiated knowing social distancing is not possible.

Introductions and Escorting.

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 members come in close contact with each other should be the goal for Chapter meetings at this time. Escorting does not meet this criterion therefore; it is not recommended to escort members for introduction at this time.

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.

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

Tina Spier
Worthy Grand Matron

Marianne R. Shenefelt
Most Worthy Grand Matron