

Mrs. Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron  
Cheyenne, WY 82009  
Email: mshene8185@yahoo.com



Andrea Stamp, PGM  
MWGM Personal Secretary  
Email: astamp@bresnan.net

## GENERAL GRAND CHAPTER

Order of the Eastern Star  
Established November 1876

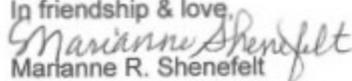
March 15, 2021

Dear Worthy Grand Matrons/Worthy Grand Patrons (currently serving), Grand Secretaries and MWGM/MWGP Deputies,

There is a wonderful situation that is happening! There are Jurisdictions who are meeting in person and have candidates waiting to receive the Degrees in the Subordinate Chapters. For our Deputies, there are candidates waiting to receive the Degrees in the Subordinate Chapters directly under GGC. This communication is to provide in-person initiation guidelines with Covid restrictions so candidates can be initiated, welcomed into Chapters and begin their journey of lifelong friendship, charitable service and long-lasting love of Eastern Star.

Attached are two separate sets of Guidelines. One set of Guidelines is for in-person initiations with the candidate(s) following the Conductress and continuing with the Conductress the entire Ceremony, always observing social distancing as carefully as possible. The other set of Guidelines are for those instances where it is necessary for the candidate(s) to be seated to observe the Ceremony of Initiation, also observing social distancing as carefully as possible. These are two separate Ceremonies and are not to be combined.

I hope you will find these Guidelines helpful. If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at [mshene8185@yahoo.com](mailto:mshene8185@yahoo.com).

In friendship & love,  
  
Marianne R. Shenefelt  
Most Worthy Grand Matron



copy: Henry S. Martin, MWGP  
Alma Bane, RWGS  
GGC Jurisprudence Committee

attachments: (2)

**MWGM Guidelines**  
***OBSERVATION OF INITIATION with Covid Restrictions***

**NOTE:** To use these instructions, your WGM or Deputy must have given your Jurisdiction or area permission to hold in-person meetings. Your government's (national and local) current coronavirus pandemic restrictions must also be observed. *The modifications to this Ceremony are due to Covid restrictions and are not permanent.*

The candidate(s) must be informed that their initiation is a ceremony where some brief physical contact may occur and physical distancing is not always possible even if they are seated for the majority of the ceremony. Face masks shall be worn by all involved because it is not possible to conduct some portions of the Initiation Ceremony and maintain the recommended social distancing of six feet.

The GGC Red Book, Rules and Regulations, Section 40, pg. 105, "Witnessing Instructions Through Labyrinth" states: *"After taking the Obligation, if there is good reason for so doing, a candidate may be seated and watch others receive instructions through the Labyrinth, but the final instructions and Secret Work must be received from the Worthy Patron. There is no abridged form of initiation. The candidates must be given the full ceremony as prescribed in the Ritual."*

Some Chapter Rooms are too small to adhere to the recommended six (6) foot social distancing; therefore, having the candidate(s) seated may be necessary during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. It is my official opinion that the unprecedented conditions of the pandemic are an acceptable reason for a candidate(s) to be seated and watch the Conductress receive the instructions through the Labyrinth.

**All manner of social distancing shall be observed as carefully as possible throughout this Ceremony.**

- ◆ In the ante room the Associate Conductress shall give her lecture, followed by instructions to the candidate(s) that once inside the Chapter Room she/he/they are expected to follow the Conductress around the Chapter Room, observing social distancing.
- ◆ The Conductress shall give her lecture to the candidate(s) and then lead her/him/them around the Chapter Room to the Associate Matron in the West. The Associate Conductress will follow until she reaches her Station and then be seated. The Conductress will lead her/him/them back of Esther's Station for introduction and the address of the Worthy Matron; then lead her/him/them to the Altar where she will demonstrate the proper way to hold the small Bible(s). The Conductress shall direct the candidate(s) to pick up the small Bible(s) from the Altar and hold as shown to receive the Obligation from the Worthy Patron, who shall observe social distancing. The candidate(s) will NOT kneel at the Altar for the Obligation during this time of Covid restrictions so the WP will not have to offer his hand to help them rise.

- ◆ The Conductress will lead the new member(s) out of the Labyrinth and seat her/him/them in a chair(s) *in the near East* on the floor of the Chapter Room in front of and at the left of the Worthy Patron, observing social distancing as carefully as possible. If this is not possible due to the size of the Chapter Room, the new member(s) may be seated on the sidelines with social distancing. The new member(s) will remain where they are seated until she/he/they sign the Chapter Bylaws.
- ◆ After seating the new member(s), the Conductress shall weave the Labyrinth as directed in the Ritual stopping at each Star Point for the lectures, etc., observing social distancing as much as possible. Please speak loudly and clearly to give the new member(s) the best possible experience under the circumstances for their initiation into our Order.
- ◆ The Prayer Circle shall be formed as directed in the Ritual. The new member(s) will remain seated. Either option is acceptable.  
Option #1: Because everyone involved is wearing masks please come together for the prayer circle as usual; **however**, before entering the Prayer Circle and taking each other's hands each person will use hand sanitizer *before entering the Circle and after leaving the Circle*. If this option is chosen, please simply pause, use hand sanitizer then proceed with the Prayer Circle ceremony; when the Prayer Circle is over, pause and use hand sanitizer again. This should be done quietly and without fanfare. The Organist may play the Altar song, but there will be no singing.  
Option #2: Because everyone involved is wearing masks, please come together for the Prayer Circle; however, if not everyone is comfortable taking each other's hands, please come closely together and *almost* touch hands. At the proper time, raise your loosely closed hands by correctly bending at the elbow and then lowering them to the Attitude of Prayer at the appropriate time. Complete the Ceremony as usual and return to your Stations. The Organist may play the Altar song; however, there will be no singing.
- ◆ The new member(s) will remain seated while the Conductress completes the exchange with the Worthy Patron. The Worthy Patron and Conductress shall ensure the new member(s) can see and hear all of this important portion of the ceremony. The grip shall be described as usual, but not demonstrated with the new member(s).
- ◆ When it is time, the new member(s) will follow the Conductress to the Secretary's desk to sign the Bylaws, and then around the Chapter Room to be introduced from the East facing West and be seated on the sidelines. These portions of the ceremony shall be done observing social distancing.

**MWGM Guidelines**  
**In-person Ceremony of Initiation with Covid restrictions**

**NOTE:** To use these instructions, your WGM or Deputy must have given your Jurisdiction or area permission to hold in-person meetings. Your government's (national and local) current coronavirus pandemic restrictions must also be observed. *The modifications to this Ceremony are due to Covid restrictions and are temporary.*

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. They shall be given the opportunity to decline to be initiated at this time. Face masks shall be worn by all involved because it is not possible to conduct some portions of the Initiation Ceremony and maintain the recommended social distancing of six feet.

**All manner of social distancing shall be observed as carefully as reasonably possible throughout the Initiation Ceremony.**

- ◆ In the ante room the Associate Conductress shall give her lecture, followed by instructions to the candidate(s) that once inside the Chapter Room she/he/they are expected to follow the Conductress around the Chapter Room, observing social distancing as carefully as possible.
- ◆ The Conductress shall give her lecture to the candidate(s) and then lead her/him/them around the Chapter Room to the Associate Matron in the West. The Associate Conductress will follow until she reaches her Station and then be seated. The Conductress will lead her/him/them back of Esther's Station for introduction and the address of the Worthy Matron; then lead her/him/them to the Altar where she will demonstrate the proper way to hold the small Bible(s). The Conductress shall direct the candidate(s) to pick up the small Bible(s) from the Altar and hold as shown to receive the Obligation from the Worthy Patron, who shall observe social distancing. The candidate(s) will NOT kneel at the Altar for the Obligation during this time of Covid restrictions so the WP will not have to offer his hand to help them rise.
- ◆ The new member(s) will follow the Conductress out of the Labyrinth and follow her as she weaves the Labyrinth as directed in the Ritual, stopping at each Star Point for the lectures with everyone observing social distancing as carefully as possible. It is recommended no ribbons or flowers be presented to the new member(s) at the Star Point stations.
- ◆ The Prayer Circle shall be formed as directed in the Ritual. These are two acceptable options for forming the Prayer Circle:  
Option #1: Because everyone involved is wearing masks please come together for the prayer circle as usual; **however**, before entering the Prayer Circle and taking each other's hands each person will use hand sanitizer *before entering the Circle and after leaving the Circle*. If this option is chosen, please simply pause,

use hand sanitizer then proceed with the Prayer Circle ceremony; when the Prayer Circle is over, pause and use hand sanitizer again. This should be done quietly and without fanfare. The Organist may play the Altar song; however, there will be no singing.

- ◆ Option #2: Because everyone involved is wearing masks please come together for the Prayer Circle, but if not everyone is comfortable taking each other's hands, please come closely together and *almost* touch hands. At the proper time, raise your loosely closed hands by correctly bending at the elbow and then lowering them to the Attitude of Prayer at the appropriate time. Complete the Ceremony as usual and return to your Stations. The Organist may play the Altar song, however there will be no singing.
  
- ◆ Complete the Initiation Ceremony as directed in the Ritual, continuing to observe social distancing as carefully as possible with the new member(s) following the Conductress. When it is time, keeping in mind social distancing, the new member(s) will be led to the Secretary's desk to sign the Bylaws, and then around the Chapter Room to be introduced from the East facing West, and then seated on the sidelines.