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IMPORTANT COVID-19 UPDATE: Opening of Subordinate Courts

Dear Grand Royal Matrons and Royal Matrons (SCJ),

It has been four months since my last communication, and I do hope you are all doing well and are staying safe and staying healthy. It has been a long spring/summer where COVID-19 restrictions have taken their toll on many neighbors, friends and family. We have been unable to be with those we hold dearest, our family members in nursing and care facilities, travel to other states to see family members, or to go on that well planned vacation. Our lives have been put on hold and the events of the past 6 months have indeed changed our lives. We thank all of you who are front line workers, caregivers, Fire Department, EMT and law enforcement for the many hours you have put in to keep us safe. Thank you for all your efforts.

Although we are far from being back to a normal lifestyle, things are slowly changing in many jurisdictions. The COVID-19 spikes are peaking and there are downward trends in many states. Businesses have started opening and outdoor activities are starting to increase. All of this comes with many restrictions and rules to follow. **COVID-19 IS NOT OVER.** So we must maintain diligence in our activities and protect ourselves along with our neighbors and friends by following the rules set by our State, County and City governments. This means wear a mask, social distance, wash your hands, use hand sanitizers and sanitizing wipes where possible. Following the rules will allow us all to get back to some kind of normalcy quicker.

I have had communication from many Grand Royal Matrons indicating many lodges are starting to open and allowing meetings to be held. This is wonderful news. In some cases, the Grand Royal Matrons are requesting that no meetings be held for 2-5 months. Unfortunately as Grand Royal Matron, the decision to have a meeting is the responsibility of the Royal Matrons of each court, not the Grand Royal Matron. The Grand Royal Matron is a guest in most subordinate courts, unless she is a member, and has no say over the events or discussions held at court meetings. The obligation taken by the Grand Royal Matron is to uphold the Grand Court Bylaws and Supreme Constitution and to oversee the ritual work. The obligation taken by the Royal Matron of a subordinate court is to uphold the Rules and Regulations of the court, the Grand Court Bylaws, and the Supreme Constitution along with overseeing the ritual work of their court. It is the responsibility of the Royal Matron to determine and poll the members of her court, to determine if the court can meet, and the number who are planning to be in attendance. She must also ensure the rules set by the Master of the Lodge and Lodge Temple Board can be met. There may be more responsibilities than in the past. Besides, having a quorum, wearing a face mask, social distancing, using hand sanitizers and sanitizing wipes other rules might include but are far from complete:

- Limitation of the number of people in the lodge. (i.e., if the limitation is 10, the RM will probably be unable to hold a meeting).
- Limitation of who can be in the lodge (such as members of other courts)
- Cleaning responsibility
- Serving food or meals.
- Wearing gloves or surgical gloves that can be disposed.

The Order of the Amaranth has not been suspended. Many of our Grand Courts have suspended their session, but Amaranth is still alive and well. We need to take a positive outlook on bringing our membership and subordinate courts back together. Yes there will be members who are unable to come out or are afraid to meet. We must respect and understand their decision. We must never force or demand their attendance. If your jurisdiction is not able to hold meetings as of yet please encourage outdoor social events where the restrictions can be met. Meet in smaller groups where you are able. Encourage ZOOM Social meetings. Think outside the box to raise money for subordinate courts, Grand Court and your Philanthropic projects. I have been invited to many subordinate court and Grand Court Zoom Meetings. They have been fun. They are typically an hour long (unless they are having two much fun that takes more time). They have used technology to raise money, and I have to say there has been a lot of

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creativity. Stay in touch with your Retirement Center and care facility members. They are important and they need to hear from you.

As Grand Royal Matron it is your job to help guide the Royal Matrons in how to open their courts while continuing to social distance, taking up the password, conducting the opening ritual, etc. I have addressed several issues in my May correspondence and I ask that you review those. In addition, there have been many questions asked regarding ideas on how to social distance in the opening ritual. Under the circumstances that we are currently dealing with, there are adjustments that I am suggesting to assist courts during these unprecedented times. They are as follows:

- Masks should be worn at all times while in the meeting.
- Passwords and grip should be taken at the door and dues cards should be shown.
- Place a fan between the person taking the password and the person giving the password to eliminate any close contact.
- Members should wear gloves: white gloves (not mitts), surgical gloves, latex gloves, etc.
- There will be no passwords taken during the opening of Court.
- In lieu of the RM asking the AM “if all present are entitled to remain?” the RM will ask the AM..” H.L. AM, are you satisfied that all present are entitled to remain”. The AM will then answer...” RM I am satisfied that all present are entitled to remain.” Or “ RM I am not satisfied that all present are entitled to remain.” If the AM is not satisfied, she will need to point out who she is questioning membership. At that time the Conductress or the Associate Conductress will obtain her credentials and report to the AM.
- During the entrance march, the officers should maintain as best as possible social distancing between the officers. This means the ME and MW should separate so they are distancing themselves from each other. I have suggested they establish a line of march in the west by aligning themselves to the inside armrest of the offices of Faith and Wisdom and all other officers follow that line during the entrance. This includes the RM and AM. The RM will not be escorted to the throne by the Conductress and the AM will not be escorted to her station by the Associate Conductress. The RP will state....The RM and the HL AM will assume their station on the throne and the west.”
- When assuming stations the ME and the MW will maintain the social distancing based on the inside armrest of the ladies of the square. When marching west the ME and MW will continue to maintain social distancing by using the outside marching line if necessary and as best as possible.
- Once officers have assumed their stations, those officers who are seated next to one another should social distance. The offices of ME, MW, Standard Bearer and Prelate have floor work that requires the use of a marching line. These officers should remain in their stations. Anyone sitting next to them should social distance by taking a seat close to their station but on the side line.
- The RP and AP should social distance if not related to the RM or AM.
- Escort should be done from the floor by asking those taking escort to stand at their chairs and be introduced.
- Depositing of Jewels should be done the easiest way possible to allow for social distancing.

These are guidelines that will help to ensure the rules of each lodge and governmental agencies are upheld while allowing our subordinate courts to have court meetings and perform their work as close to our ritual as possible. Sometimes, flexibility is necessary and yes, these guidelines do not follow the exact ritual but it is only temporary and sometimes adjustments are needed, depending on the circumstances we are given. The most important thing when adjusting the ritual work is to keep the beauty of our work present. These steps do not allow for “opening or closing in short Form”, there is no short form in Amaranth. We are only adjusting to protect the safety and welfare of our members. I assure you as we continue to suppress the COVID-19 virus and our lifestyles return to a safer normal, we will require the ritual work return to normal. I will continue to set aside the requirement for courts to make up meetings if a quorum cannot be met during the pandemic. In addition, I will also continue setting aside the 10 meetings a year requirement if courts cannot hold their meetings during the pandemic.

Lastly, for those Jurisdictions that suspended their sessions, I hope you are thinking and planning for the unknown, a plan B for your session. No one knows how long this pandemic will last or if we will be facing another round of COVID-19. I pray every night, that this will end sooner than later, but if the situation is such that you are unable to utilize your current plans, how do you conduct your Grand Court Sessions? This pandemic hit us quickly with no time to plan, but we have time now. There have been many jurisdictions who have had Grand Court in Masonic Lodges or in a Shrine Temple. This may be your plan B. We know what we have been dealing with, so please don't wait until your session is around the corner. We are all looking forward to coming to your jurisdictions.

The most important effort we can make is to stay in touch and help one another where and when needed. Most importantly, everyone needs to stay safe and stay healthy. Your welfare is the most important thing, so don't be afraid to reach out for help.

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I will readdress these guidelines in January, 2021 at which time a decision will be made to extend these guidelines further or return to our traditional ritualistic work.

Let us always keep the health and safety of our members first in all the decisions we make. Please stay safe and stay healthy.

In Amaranth Love and Service

Dorothy I. Kippie

Dorothy I. Kippie
Supreme Royal Matron



C: Patti Baker, Supreme Secretary
George Ullrich, Supreme Lecturer
Sylvia Saunders, Supreme Jurisprudence Chair
Grand Secretaries
SCJ Secretaries

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