



GRAND CHAPTER OF CALIFORNIA
Order of the Eastern Star

Sharon Jazwiecki
Worthy Grand Matron

Bob Hovorka
Worthy Grand Patron

May 18, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

We find ourselves living in extraordinary times. The emergence of the COVID-19 virus has altered our lives in profound ways and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The health and welfare of our members is of the utmost importance and we must continue to protect our members as much as possible. As of a report dated May 5, 2020, provided to me from our Grand Secretary, seventy-five percent (75%) of our membership falls into the high-risk category of the ages of 60-100+. This percentage does not include any of our younger members who may also be in this high-risk category due to medical conditions.

Therefore, in this time of emergency, and with the concurrence and support of the Chairmen of the Committees for Jurisprudence, Constitution and Bylaws, and Finance, as well as the support and endorsement of all elected Grand Officers, I am exercising my Executive Authority to make the following decisions:

- Postpone the California Grand Chapter Annual Session scheduled to begin October 20, 2020, in Visalia to October 21, 2021.
- The current corps of Grand Officers, including Deputy Grand Matrons, will be asked to continue in their current office through Grand Chapter 2021. All elected Grand Officers have agreed to do so.
- All elected and appointed Grand Chapter committee members (including Home Board) will be asked to continue on their current committees and boards through Grand Chapter 2021. If you are unable to remain in your current position beyond October 2020, I ask that you contact me as soon as possible so that I may have time to find a replacement.
- All elected officers of our subordinate chapters are asked to continue in their current office for another term. Except to replace someone who resigns, no election of officers and no installations may be held, and these cannot be done until such time as are able to meet again. This will require a special notification to your members as stated in our Constitution and Laws.
- If a chapter has term limits for any of their chapter officers or trustees listed in their Bylaws, they will be extended for another term.

- For the remainder of calendar year 2020, all California Grand Chapter activities and events, except for virtual fundraising activities for our Senior Living Community and the Special Projects of the Worthy Grand Matron and Worthy Grand Patron, are cancelled. This includes all Official Visits by the Worthy Grand Matron and Worthy Grand Patron, all Deputy Grand Matron Official Visits, and all Receptions (or honor nights) for Grand Officers and Deputy Grand Matrons. The plan is to pick back up where we left off last year and not repeat anything that has already been completed (AMIs, OVs, etc.).
- The term of the Grand Representative commissions may be adjusted. Further details will be outlined in a future communication.
- The elected officers of the subordinate chapters may, by majority vote, approve the issuance of remits and demits in regard to the 2020 per capita. The issuance of remits and demits must be completed before June 30, 2020. No demits or remits may be issued after that time unless during a regular Stated Meeting of the Chapter. Votes by the elected officers will all need to be ratified by a vote of the Chapter when they are able to meet again. Further details regarding demits, remits, and suspensions will be communicated directly to the Worthy Matrons and Secretaries of each Chapter.
- My previous instructions regarding the payment of a Chapter's essential expenses remain in effect.
- Because we are unable to meet and therefore unable to vote on any proposed budgets, the budgets in place and voted on at the 2019 Grand Chapter Session will remain in effect until the new ones are presented and voted upon at the Grand Chapter Session in 2021. To the members and chapters this means that there will be no increase incurred for per capita.
- No Chapter shall hold a meeting until such time as determined by the Worthy Grand Matron and Worthy Grand Patron. We are requiring you to wait for instructions from us as to when you may be allowed to hold regular Chapter meetings to prevent confusion and avoid conflicting information. We will let you know when you will be allowed to hold Chapter meetings. We will also outline procedures that must be followed. This will include any needed changes in chapter setup, conduct during a meeting, etc.

I wish to thank the Executive Team consisting of all Elected Grand Officers and our Grand Marshal (Sisters Laura Bouwens, Tammy Kinzy, Peggy Tucker, Kimberlie Kruse, Debbie Sanborn, and Alice Raymond, and Brothers Bob Hovorka and Scott Smissen); and the Chairmen of Jurisprudence, Constitution and Bylaws, and Finance (Past Grand Matrons, Sisters Alyson Grant, Sheri Weisser, and Past Grand Master, Brother Steve Doan). Thank you, My Sisters and Brothers, for all your love, support, and knowledge you freely gave.

The State of California is just now beginning to see some easing on stay-home restrictions. The State has already stated it will not move to further reduce restrictions without further reassurances regarding either a treatment or a vaccine. Instructions from General Grand Chapter and from California Grand Lodge have been clear: We are to obey state and local mandates regarding the country's response to the pandemic. These on-going restrictions, as well as the lack of certainty as to when further easing of these restrictions will begin, combined with the Governor's stated intent that large gatherings, such as concerts or conventions, are the last thing that will be allowed, have affected these decisions.

We are not alone in making these determinations. As of this writing, 20 other Grand Jurisdictions have made the same decision to postpone their annual session and have their current corps of officers continue until 2021.

The postponement of the annual Grand Chapter Session was not an easy decision to make. However, we determined that it was a virtual certainty that we would not be allowed to meet in Visalia as originally scheduled. As of this date, the Visalia Convention authority understands our position and has waived all penalties associated with the postponement of our 2020 Annual Session. In return for this courtesy we have negotiated to extend our existing contracts by one year, which were set to expire with the 2022 Annual Session. They will now expire with the 2023 Annual Session.

Thank you, Brother Steve Doan, Finance Chairman, for your expertise and all of the extra hours you expended in negotiating with the Visalia Convention Center to make this possible without incurring any financial loss to Grand Chapter. To our members, please know that while we wanted to inform you earlier of what we were working on, we could not while we were under active negotiations.

As you are all aware, the planning and execution of a Grand Chapter Annual Session cannot start on a moment's notice. It takes months and years of preparation and work. Over 240 of our Sisters and Brothers work year-round to make our Annual Session a wonderful event. Under current restrictions they are unable to meet and perform the work necessary to prepare for the Annual Session. It would be extremely unfair to require them to continue to work, only to discover that the Convention Center would remain closed.

As this letter is being released, we are meeting via Zoom with our Deputy Grand Matrons, Worthy Matrons and Worthy Patrons to inform them personally. Our video and this letter will also be posted on the Grand Chapter website (oescal.org), in the California Eastern Star Facebook Group, as well as being emailed out to our Chapter Secretaries and other members. We believe that Laura, Scott, Tammy, Peggy, Kimberlie, and Debbie will also be holding Zoom meetings later in the week with their subordinate officers.

If you have any questions regarding these decisions and their ramifications, please direct them to the Grand Secretary via email gsecretary@oescal.org, and she will pass them on to us. Please do not call as there remains a great deal of work that needs to be done.

As always, we thank you for your love, patience, and support. We love you all dearly and miss you tremendously.

Until we meet again, thank you and God Bless,

Sharon Jazwiecki
Worthy Grand Matron

Bob Hovorka
Worthy Grand Patron