

## Altar Service

**Ritual: Pages 16-17; 41-43; 46-47**

**Book of Instruction: Pages 18-21; 67-69**

### During a Ritualistic Opening:

When the Worthy Matron directs the Conductress to “**attend at the Altar**”, The Conductress leaves her station to the right of her pedestal if there is one.

The right of her pedestal is the East. She marches west along the South marching line 2 to 4 steps beyond Esther’s station. She makes an acute angle, enters the Labyrinth between Ruth’s and Esther’s stations and stops at the west side of the Altar.

When she leaves her station, the Star points slowly turn toward the Altar.

As she enters the Labyrinth, all members assume the Reverent Attitude.

The Conductress waits for the music to stop. She gives a slight nod to the Worthy Matron. She places her left hand at the center of the back edge of the Bible and her right hand at the center of the right edge of the Bible simultaneously,

### Opening the Bible:

Using her right hand, she slowly raises the edge of the Bible while at the same time guiding the back of the Bible with her left hand until it is perpendicular to the Altar. She slowly brings her left hand up the front of the Bible. Using both her thumbs, she opens the Bible to **Matthew 2:2**, and then reverently lowers the edges of the Bible to the Altar.

She straightens and brings her arms straight back into the Salutation Sign. She says to herself as the members say to themselves, “**We have seen his Star in the East and are come to worship him.**” She drops her hands to her sides and slowly returns to the edge of the Labyrinth between Ruth’s and Esther’s chairs and assumes the Reverent Attitude.

### Backing to the edge of the Labyrinth: (Conductress and Chaplain)

The Conductress and the Chaplain step back from the altar, eyes on the Bible, and pause reverently. Turn outward and walk forward to assume their place in the officers’ circle at the edge of the Labyrinth, turn inward to assume their position in the circle. For the Conductress, she turns to the right when leaving the altar **and** when reaching her place in the circle of officers at the edge of the labyrinth. . For the Chaplain, she/he turns to the left when leaving the altar **and** left when reaching her/his place in the circle of officers at the edge of the labyrinth.

- **The Conductress always turns to her right and right.**
- **The Chaplain always turns to their turn left and left.**

**WM directs the Chaplain to lead prayer:**

Following the Conductress having returned to the edge of the Labyrinth, the Worthy Matron then directs the Chaplain by saying, **“That we may have the needed grace to do our work well, let us unite in prayer,”** The Chaplain, dropping her/his hands from the reverent attitude to her/his sides, leaves her/his station using square corners, proceeds west along the North marching line 2 to 4 steps beyond Esther’s station, makes an acute angle, and enters the Labyrinth between Esther and Martha.

When she/he reaches the Altar, she/he waits for the music to stop, kneels (see following paragraph) and assumes the Reverent Attitude, and leads the Chapter in prayer. After the proper response is given, **“So may it ever be,”** the Chaplain rises, and slowly backs out to the edge of the Labyrinth. At this time, everyone drops the Reverent Attitude.

It is the Chaplain’s choice whether she/he kneels at the altar for prayer. If the Chaplain remains standing, she/he assumes that attitude of prayer and waits for the music to cease before beginning the prayer. After the prayer response is given, the Chaplain drops the attitude of prayer and returns to the edge of the Labyrinth.

After singing the opening ode, the Worthy Matron declares the Chapter open and the Warder informs the Sentinel, Warder responds to Worthy Matron. Organist plays and the Conductress and Chaplain turn outward and retrace their steps to their stations.

**During a Ritualistic Closing:**

During the Closing of Chapter, after the Worthy Matron says, **“Let us unite in prayer”**, the Chaplain goes to the Altar in the same manner she/he did in the Opening of Chapter. When the prayer is finished, and the proper response is given, the Chaplain returns to the edge of the Labyrinth and assumes the Reverent Attitude.

The Conductress goes to the Altar in the same manner she did in the Opening, gives the Salutation Sign, **reverently** closes the Bible, gently sliding her left hand down the cover of the Bible, guides the Bible to lay on the Altar, centered, lowers her hands to her sides, and gives a slight nod. She slowly returns to the edge of the Labyrinth. Everyone drops the Reverent Attitude.

Following the Warder’s report to the Sentinel there is no response made to the Worthy Matron, the Organist beings playing without a response and the Conductress and Chaplain retrace their steps to their stations.

### **Opening and Closing the Bible in an Open Meeting:**

During an Open meeting, when directed by the Worthy Matron to simply “**Open**” or “**Close**” the Bible, the Conductress enters the Labyrinth in the usual manner, waits for the music to stop, reverently opens/close the Bible, drops her hands to her sides **giving no Salutation Sign or nod**. She slowly returns to the edge of the Labyrinth and continues, retracing her steps to her station.