

## **Chico Friends Meeting**

### **Advices on our response to unsheltered people in our neighborhood**

As Friends we are committed to the expression of faith in action, to engagement with the needs of the world, and to a living expression of our testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, and equality. We were drawn to our Meetinghouse in part because it brought us into a neighborhood of diversity and challenge. Unsheltered persons in our neighborhood are sometimes drawn to our property as they seek to manage their lack of home and resources. We are aware of our relationship and responsibility to them, to our neighbors, to our property, and to one another. We are concerned both for the well-being of our meeting community and for the needs of the stranger. As we seek to discern the right way forward, we honor our care for each other and for the persons living in the surrounding community, whether in homes or not. The following advices for our Chico Friends Meeting community represent guidance growing from our discernment.

1. Guided by your Quaker faith and practice, treat everyone who comes onto Chico Friends Meeting property with respect and care.
2. While we welcome all who wish to join us in Quaker worship and other Meeting activities, our buildings and grounds are not open to those not participating except by groups using the buildings with permission from the Meeting. Make this policy known in a respectful and clear way.
3. At present, our Chico community does not provide housing for all who need it. Our meetinghouse porches on Hemlock Street sometimes serve as temporary resting places or shelter from harsh weather for passersby, and we are glad to provide that. Our drinking fountain is available to the public, but that is normally the limit of our direct service to passersby. We do not permit smoking, the leaving of trash, camping, or any behaviors that may endanger our property or disturb our neighbors. We post signs to that effect and maintain contact with neighbors to see that these limits are observed.
4. Chico Friends Meeting buildings and grounds is property under our care. As stewards of its well-being, we make clear guidelines for its use and commit ourselves to the active caretaking they describe. Treat those you find on our property with respect, but do not hesitate to speak plainly and directly about the respect also due our community and property. Take responsibility for this care by asking anyone misusing our buildings and grounds or occupying them without permission, to leave. If violent or disruptive behavior endangers people or property, we are responsible for seeking the aid of police. Do not hesitate to act on this responsibility, and, if you can, stand as a witness to whatever encounter results, attentive to everyone's right to safety and civility.
5. Provide resource information that may be helpful to those needing assistance. While we have discerned that it does not serve others or our Meeting to try to provide direct services at our meetinghouse, we feel keenly the responsibility to help those in need to access such services. In

your desire to help people in need, be mindful of our Meeting's decision and offer what assistance you can.

6. Our Chico Friends Meeting provides us with a spiritual home. Anyone is welcome to join our public services and may be invited to other occasions. If you invite a stranger onto our property, assume the responsibility of accompanying this person for the duration of their time in our space. Be mindful of the possible impact on the community of such an invitation, of the particular vulnerabilities of children, newcomers, our property and our neighbors, that may be affected by your invitation.

7. Our Fellowship Hall hosts our children's program and we carry a particular responsibility for the safety of the children in our care. The Fellowship Hall and surrounding yard are not open for non-participants during the children's program. The back door of the Fellowship Hall is locked when children are present there, and a key is available in the Meetinghouse to access the bathrooms by that back door without disturbing the children's program.

8. Passersby sometimes leave belongings on our property. Be sensitive to the predicament of those who may have no place to store their belongings, and place such belongings on or outside the fence on the alley at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street end and away from the valley oak tree where they are accessible to the owners until they are removed to the trash containers. Valuable items (ID, cell phone), can be taken to the Jesus Center where staff can help in identifying the owner.

9. We keep a record of our interactions with unsheltered people to help us know what practices may both respect them and protect the property. If you have significant contact with unsheltered people or find trash or belongings on Chico Friends Meeting grounds, make a note in the log in the office or inform the Building and Grounds Committee clerk or Meetinghouse Steward by phone or email in a timely manner.

10. Consider your own place and responsibility in the difficult condition of those without home or resources for a normal life. How are you called to respond? Is there some direct service, or support for existing efforts to serve unsheltered people in our community, to which you may offer yourself? How might our meeting find ways to serve both the needs of those on our porches, and of our meeting community, as we seek to find what love can do?

*(Revised November 2017 from draft read at Meeting for Business, August, 2017. Submitted for consideration at the December 2018, Meeting for Business, minor revisions were suggested that have been incorporated into this version ,and the following minute was approved: **03-12-17 Minute – We approve the document “Chico Friends Meeting Advices on our response to unsheltered people in our neighborhood,” with small changes, and will revisit the document at the March 2018 Meeting for Business.**)*