**SHORT TALK OUTLINE**

**JESUS STEPPED INTO THE NEIGHBOURHOOD**

**Introduction**

We are so pleased that you have chosen to join us for this Christmas Service and Celebration Meal. We want you to know that you are part of this community, this neighbourhood, and you have a place. In essence, celebrating the birth of Jesus reminds us that you belong to me and I belong to you. We are friends, neighbours in Christ Jesus.

There is a version of the Bible called *The Message*, and in John’s Gospel, Chapter 1 verse 14 we hear these words about Jesus coming as a baby into the world.

‘The Word became flesh and blood and moved into the neighbourhood’ (John 1:14 *MSG*).

‘The Word’ is a name we use for Jesus, and this verse reminds us that Jesus came to earth to live as man but also to become the Saviour of the world. Christmas is a joyous celebration, a time when we remember that Jesus literally moved into our neighbourhood, here on earth.

**Who is my neighbour?**

Here are some words you may have heard before, words of Jesus: ‘Love one another as I have loved you, and love your neighbour as yourself’ (Matthew 22:39). So, who is your neighbour? When we hear that question we might imagine the people who live next door. But actually the word neighbour is much bigger than just the people next door, or round the corner. A neighbour is someone with whom we share a connection. Today we want you to know that you share a connection with us. That’s why we are all here to celebrate Christmas. Jesus is the one who has connected us and brought us together. You are my neighbour and I am yours. We may look different from one another. We may have a different cultural background. We may even believe different things. But today we are found here as neighbours together, and our connection is Jesus. Today we are celebrating the love and joy that Jesus brought when he ‘moved into the neighbourhood’ as a tiny baby.

**The first Nativity neighbours**

In our scripts/monologues we heard how the innkeeper and his wife became neighbours to Mary and Joseph, and then how the shepherds also brought their friendship and love, realising Jesus had moved into the earthly neighbourhood. I wonder what those stories have made us think about? Perhaps it’s the idea that Jesus came to bring love to everyone in this world, no matter who they are, where they live, what they do as a job, whether they work or not, whether they are young or old, rich or poor – Jesus moved into the earthly neighbourhood for everyone. Or perhaps it made you think about what kind of neighbour you are to others, or what kind of neighbour other people are to you? Maybe you felt a little sad because you don’t know your neighbours very well, or you feel a little alone at times? Well, we have some good news for you – you are welcome here at The Salvation Army! There are people here who want to be your neighbours, who are happy to become your friends, and we value you and are thankful for you. You are not alone, you are part of this neighbourhood that we call church, and we want you to know you are welcome here any time! That’s the Christmas gift we offer you because we want you to be part of this neighbourhood.

**Love came down and moved into the neighbourhood**

As Christians we understand that the name of Jesus to us means love, and this reminds us again that love – Jesus – moved into the neighbourhood on that first Christmas morning. There is a popular newer Christian song called ‘I Speak Jesus’ by Charity Gayle. It’s not a Christmas song but it reminds us of how important it is to know the love of Jesus at Christmas. The words talk about the name of Jesus and say, ‘Your name is power, your name is healing, your name is life. Break every stronghold, shine through the shadows, burn like a fire.’ The name of Jesus is still as important today on this day of celebration as it was to the shepherds on the first Christmas Day. Jesus is not just relevant in our lives and our neighbourhoods only on Christmas Day, he is relevant every day and every year, because he moved into the neighbourhood to bring us love, power, healing and life.

**Conclusion**

We hope you have felt the welcoming love of Jesus today in this celebration. If you want to know more about Jesus, then please do speak to us and we can tell you about how Jesus grew up and lived a life as a man and then died as our Saviour on the cross, and now lives to be our friend. We are your neighbours, and we want to share the story of Jesus with you. The name of Jesus is powerful, and even simply saying the name of Jesus can bring a peace like no other into our lives. Let’s use the words of the song ‘I Speak Jesus’ again as a closing prayer for all of us as we share this day as friends and neighbours.

‘I just want to speak the name of Jesus (in our neighbourhood)

Over every heart and every mind (and that includes you)

Because I know there is peace within your presence (Jesus)

I speak Jesus. Amen’

*(‘I Speak Jesus’* by Charity Gayle*)*

God bless you, friends and neighbours. Let’s celebrate Jesus together – he moved into the neighbourhood for each one of us and his love is available for each one of us. You are included in the neighbourhood of Jesus.