



Reza's journey

(Adapted from a true story, for Journeys in the Spirit)

There are still some parts of the world where people are not allowed to go to the place of worship they want to. One of these places is Iran where it is against the law to become a Christian. Many of the people who escape to Britain, come from Iran. Here is a story about one such person.

Reza was 15. He lived in the biggest city of Iran. But he had a big secret, which he couldn't tell anyone.

He had found himself asking big questions about the world and existence, and talking them through with his best friend Darius. He felt there was something missing from the religion he was taught at school, and he didn't like it when the government used faith to justify doing bad things.

Darius invited Reza to a party at his house, where people were talking about a way of thinking based on peace and friendship. It made sense to him and he kept going back. But he couldn't tell anyone.

Somehow somebody did find out about the meetings at the house though, and after only a month the house was raided. His best friend was arrested and taken to prison.

Reza was visiting friends at the time in another part of the country, and realised that the government would be looking for him too. He found a person he could pay to help him escape. They met near the border and they travelled by car then by horse, across the mountains to Turkey.

The man left him there, and Reza didn't know what to do. But he had some family in Britain, so he travelled on alone to try and find them. He travelled on a boat full of people from Turkey to Greece, then by bus from Greece to Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary. He carried on to Hungary, but there the police caught him and put him in prison.

When he got out, he travelled on across Austria, to Italy and France, and the nearest port to Britain, Calais. The journey took him a whole year, but it wasn't over yet.

There were thousands of people in Calais who had escaped their countries too. There was a big camp near the port where people helped one another survive, which he went to too. It was also a dangerous and lawless place, where instead of protecting people, the police would come in at night and fire teargas.

He prayed like he had learnt to in Iran. He met people from Britain who could help

him. They helped arrange his passage to England where he was reunited with his family.

He was interrogated by the British Government about his reasons for travelling to England. Some people in Britain said that he should have stayed in Iran.

But many people helped him along the way. The people he met in Calais were Christians, in Britain local Quakers helped him settle in, he was provided a lawyer who was Muslim, and placed with a foster parent who was an atheist. All of them respected Reza's journey of faith, and he always respected everyone else.

By respecting and learning from different experiences we can each become wiser and make the world more peaceful. By taking action in solidarity with those who are oppressed, we can find that we have much more in common than the things which make us different.