

The common language of liturgy

FOR Santhosh Daniel, it makes little difference whether he is serving at a cathedral in Delhi or in Portsmouth - the liturgy is very similar across the world.

The 24-year-old has been at Portsmouth Cathedral for almost two years and is part of the altar serving team. His roles include as crucifer, carrying the processional cross; as thurifer, who swings the incense-burner; and as acolyte.

He had been part of the team at the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in Delhi, part of the Anglican Church of North India.

He came to the UK in 2022 to study for a Masters in Bristol and joined the team at the cathedral there.

So when he came to Portsmouth two years ago, it made sense that he became part of the cathedral community. He also took up a paid role teaching history - and sometimes RE and geography - at Miltoncross Academy within the city.

"I've been part of serving teams for the past seven

years," he said. "In fact, back in India I actually gave the sermon on Reformation Sunday.

"It's a way of feeling connected to and responsible for the worship within a cathedral, and it's helped me in several stages of my life.

"I was brought up in the Christian faith, and my family always taught me Christian values. So I feel deeply connected to Christianity and being within a church building does help me to get closer to God. I also read Daily Bread reflections on the Bible each day.

"There are real similarities between the Church in India and in the UK. The liturgy is often familiar, even if sometimes the hymns and songs we sing are different.

"I think that's one of the great things about the Christian Church. Wherever you are in the world, there is a Christian community that you can feel part of, worshipping alongside others who believe the same thing you do."



Santhosh Daniel, who volunteers as a server in Portsmouth Cathedral and works as a teacher at Miltoncross Academy

"Back in Iran, I had had some feelings about becoming a Christian. The Islamic regime is so brutal and corrupt that people either become Christians or atheists.

"I had been involved in protests in 2022 during the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' movement. Thousands of people were arrested, tortured and killed, and I came very close to being shot in the street.

"In the most recent protests in January 2026, the situation escalated significantly, with more than 45,000 people reported to have been killed in just over two nights. Sadly, I also lost my cousin.

"It has been 47 years since the Islamic Marxist coup. Before that, Christians, Jews and Muslims used to live together peacefully in Iran under the Shah, and people experienced democracy then.

"But the Islamic Republic have slaughtered so many of our own people or put them in jail. And the taxes that we pay help to fund the military and terrorist groups around the world, while we get poorer.

"This bombing is our best chance of defeating the Islamic Republic. I'm obviously worried about friends and family, but there are 90 million people in Iran and 80 million of them want regime change. So

many normal people in Iran feel unheard and unseen. So many of them would like to see the Crown Prince, Reza Pahlavi, in charge of a secular, democratic country of Iran."

And Aryan*, 20, also originally started worshipping in St Margaret's, Southsea, before switching to **St Philip's, Cosham**, with Fran. He came to the UK as an asylum seeker in 2023 because his life was in danger from the Iranian regime. He was an Iranian man who had become a Christian and was worshipping in secret. He escaped through Turkey.

"At the time I was living in the Royal Beach Hotel in Southsea,

Latvian families enjoy meeting up

ONE of the groups that meets regularly at St Luke's Church in Southsea is a community from Latvia.

At Easter, they gathered in the church's Host Café for a celebration that included traditional activities for Latvian families.

Those activities included decorating eggs with boiled onion skins, which creates a natural dye and forms intricate patterns. They also shared different types of round food.

The symbolism of both the eggs and the circular food reflects new life, probably based on the round stone that blocked the entrance to Jesus's tomb before his resurrection from the dead.

Children were also able to play games and create colourful images as part of the get-together.

Families with Latvian roots gather every two weeks in the church to share aspects of their traditional culture. It's one of the



Latvian families enjoy Easter celebrations at St Luke's Church, Southsea

few such gatherings for Latvian families this side of London.

Mum Louise Kemp, who comes from Southampton with her daughter to these gatherings, said: "Often the children have a Latvian school, and we sing

traditional songs from our culture.

"I enjoy being together with people from my community and being reminded of our roots. It's nice to have friends who also speak your language."



Iranian Christians are praying for peace and democracy

and my friends told me about St Margaret's," he said. "I was in a bad place mentally, but I was welcomed as if I was family. At the time the service words were not in Farsi, but my friends translated for me,

and then I learnt English. I moved to St Philip's with Fran. It's a little different, but I still feel welcome."

Aryan is now studying GCSEs at Portsmouth College, having

obtained permission to remain in the UK, and has found a more permanent place to live in the city. He also believes the bombing of the Islamic regime might be the only way to lasting peace.

"The regime did kill 40,000 people, and I don't think dictators change their behaviour," he said. "Before the bombing, I think Trump did try diplomacy, but it didn't work.

"As a Christian, I do believe that war is bad and I would love there to be peace. But I would also like there to be democracy and freedom.

"In the UK, you have the freedom to pray and read the Bible, and I would like that for my home country."

* Names have been changed to protect those at risk