Hi, my name is Zafar and I am a Muslim, I follow the religion of Islam which is based on the teachings of the Prophet Mohammed. A prophet is somebody who brings a message from God, and, as I Muslim, I personally believe that Muhammed is the last prophet or messenger from God. I am Shia Muslim, Shia Muslims make up about 15% of 1.8 billion Muslims in the world, so around 300 million people, and as a Shia Muslim, I believe that only God can choose **the leaders of the Muslim faith.**

I grew up in London in a traditional, religious family and religion was a very important part of my life.

*what was it like living in a traditional Muslim family?*

I learnt how to pray when I was around 4 years old, and I have been praying 5 times a day since I was around 8 years old. (Here is a prayer mat that many Muslims use, however, it’s not necessary, you can pray in any clean and quiet place.

Two particular things shaped my understanding of my faith - Karbala and 9/11. The first is an annual commemoration that is particular emphasised amongst Shia Muslims, which recounts the story of the massacre of Imām Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, who was killed whilst protesting the injustice during his time. What particularly inspires me about this story is the fact that there are people of all age groups in within the narrative, and it is a story which inspires me to bring positive change in the world.

The other story - 9/11, changed my life forever as a teenager, bringing Islam into the spotlight and inspiring me to learn more about my faith to try to understand why people would act in the way they did.

I have always asked questions and been interested in understanding and learning more about my faith and this led to my decision to become an Imam. An imam is the person who leads the prayer in a Mosque, a Muslim place of worship, and also leads and teaches the community that attends that Mosque.

I have involved myself in various interfaith programmes at school, university as well as in the local community. Interfaith means coming together with people from different faiths and beliefs to learn about each other, understand each other better and to work together in the community to create a better world.

**These experiences all helped me realise the similarities between the religions, from studying and learning about different religions *I think* that one of the goals that they all share is to help us to become good people.**

I end with one of my favourite quotes from Imam Ali, son in law and successor of Prophet Mohammed, who is reported to have said, “People are enemies of what they don’t know”