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"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty" II Cor. 3:17

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MORE THAN A MERE CALENDAR

By Andrea Neal

In this season when we celebrate the birth of Christ, it is inspiring to know that an Indiana artist is working across the globe to spread a message of good will and peace.

"If we believe in God, then I think we have to believe in each other and it doesn't matter what faith and culture we come from," says K.P. Singh of Indianapolis, best known for his pen-and-ink drawings of architectural and spiritual landmarks. "By building friendship we can come to peace."

Singh, a native of India and follower of the Sikh faith, has been a constant advocate for interfaith bridge building. He has placed his message into a super-sized 2007 "Interfaith Calendar" that he hopes will offer much more than a reminder of month and day.

It's a project of Future Computing Solutions Inc. and the Sikh Center of Orange County, which produce an annual calendar with Sikh motifs (To obtain one, go to www.kpsinghdesigns.com.)

The CEO of Future Computing had been trying to get Singh to do a calendar for several years, but Singh wasn't interested unless it could carry an interfaith theme. "When you are ready to talk about an interfaith calendar, then will I consider loaning my artwork to this project," Singh told him.

The calendar was released last month in Anaheim, Calif., at the Annual Sikh Heritage Evening, an event that draws prominent

K.P. SINGH 2007 CALENDAR BY SIKHPPOINT.COM



Sikhs from around the world. About 50,000 of the calendars were printed, and Singh hopes they end up in homes and offices from Indiana to India.

Accompanying each month of the calendar is a description of a religion; a piece of art by Singh connected to that faith and excerpts from Sikh scripture or other inspirational text. The holidays of the major religions are listed.

January features Sikhism and this excerpt from Jaap Sahib, Patshai 10: "Salutations to you, O God who is sun of suns, the moon of moons; king of kings and king of kings of angels; the darkest pitch darkness, the brightest of lights; manifested in the tiniest of seeds and largest elements of nature and creation."

April explains Christianity and features Singh's drawing of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris. May describes Judaism

and has a picture of The Western Wall in Jerusalem, along with these words from Exodus: "Let me make them a sanctuary that I may dwell among them." September discusses Islam and is accompanied by Singh's Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem where Mohammad is believed to have ascended to heaven.

The major religions of course differ in many ways, but they offer similar words of counsel to believers, Singh notes. These are to love God, love one's fellow man, serve others and strive for peace.

Look around at the war in Iraq, upheaval in the Middle East, even strife in our own communities. "I believe a lot of our trouble is coming from our misunderstanding of other cultures, other faiths," Singh says.

Singh's own commitment to interfaith work grew in the days after the Sept. 11 attacks when turban-wearing Sikhs like him

were mistaken for Muslims and felt the sting of prejudice. For Singh, celebrating diversity is a passion and not something that arises from political correctness or popular whim.

"This calendar is not just a colorful presentation of my drawing or lofty ideals. For me it has the potential of a thousand discussions and forums among people, educators, spiritual leaders and neighbors. Our learning from and about each other is the first step to dispel darkness that begins with ignorance and stereotyping that has led humanity to one too many conflicts. We need to give each other our peace and seek friendship through mutual respect and understanding."

It is fitting that this message of hope comes in the Christmas season when so many of Singh's friends are recalling the birth of a baby in Bethlehem.

As it says in the gospel of Luke, after appearing to shepherds to announce the good news of a Savior's arrival, a large group of angels joined together proclaiming, "Give glory to God in heaven, and on Earth let there be peace among the people who please God."

Wouldn't it be wonderful if something as common as a calendar could spread the uncommon message of the angels?