

# Township Council Recognizes Sikhs With Proclamation

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With Mayor Phil Kramer and Alex Kharazi looking on (left to right) Ardaman Singh reads a statement about the Sikh religion at the Township Council meeting.

A proclamation acknowledging the Sikh religion during one of its most significant celebrations was given April 9 by the Township Council.

The proclamation, read by Mayor Phil Kramer, was for Vaisakhi, "one of the most religiously significant days in Sikh history, commemorating the creation of the Khalsa, a fellowship of devout Sikhs, by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699," according to the proclamation.

The proclamation was presented to Ardaman Singh, the vice-president of the Board of Education.

The proclamation noted that Vaisakhi is usually celebrated by "performing Seva (selfless service), such as providing free meals to all visitors to Sikh gurdwaras (houses of worship)."

The celebration usually includes an immense festival, Singh said, when Sikhs gather to "remember history and recommit to their religious traditions."

"I would like to thank, and recommit my support to, Franklin Township on behalf of the Sikh families who have made Franklin our home," Singh said.

Alex Kharazi, president of the Franklin Township Interfaith Council, said proclamations such as this are good because they educate people.

"People usually are afraid of what they do not understand, especially when it comes to culture," he said. "If we understand each other, we will not fear each other, we will love each other."

"We have so many values that are common to all of us, regardless of our faith," Kharazi said, ticking off the three principles of Sikhism: Keeping God in mind at all times, earning an honest living, giving to charity and caring for others.

"I often have said that we are all children of Adam and created equally in humanity, we just look different, and that's also a gift from our creator," he said. "I hope we all learn to love each other, respect each other and make Franklin a great, diverse place to live."

Mayor Phil Kramer said the Franklin Sikh community is another element that "Adds to the richness of the town."

"Ardaman herself adds to our society by being a member of the Board of Education," he said. "I think you have to go a very, very long way to find a place as special as Franklin that has this kind of richness within 47 square miles. You have to go to the UN to find a denser diversity than this."