

Obama's Muslim outreach named top religion story of 2009

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—The nation's religion journalists named President Obama's speech to the Muslim world as the top religion story of the year.

Members of the Religion Newswriters Association ranked the June speech in Cairo, in which the president quoted from the Quran and said America will "never" be at war with Islam, as the No. 1 religion story of 2009.



President Obama's address to the Muslim world at Cairo University in June was one of the year's biggest religion stories, and perhaps one of the most controversial.

(PHOTO/RNS/Courtesy Chuck Kennedy/The White House)

Evangelical leader Rick Warren, whose invocation at Obama's inauguration was greeted by protests from gay-rights groups, was named the 2009 Religion Newsmaker of the Year.

The entire top 10 is as follows:

1. [President Obama promises](#) a new start of Muslim-U.S. relations in a speech at Cairo University.
2. Health care reform, the key topic in Congress for much of the year, includes religious groups urging assistance for “the least of these” and groups like the Roman Catholic bishops seeking restrictions on abortion funding.
3. Considered a devout Muslim, Maj. Nidal Hasan, the accused gunman in the Fort Hood massacre, prompts a review of the role of Islam in terrorism, with some fearing a backlash.
4. George Tiller, considered the nation’s leading abortion doctor, is shot to death while ushering at his Wichita, Kansas, church.
5. Mormons in California come under attack from some gay rights supporters because of their November 2008 lobbying efforts on Proposition 8, which outlawed gay marriage. Iowa, Vermont and New Hampshire approved gay marriage later in the year, but it is overturned by Maine voters.
6. President Obama gives the commencement speech and receives an honorary degree at the University of Notre Dame after the Roman Catholic university becomes embroiled in debates over his abortion views.
7. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America votes to ordain gay and lesbian clergy who are in a monogamous committed relationship, prompting some conservative churches to make steps toward forming a new denomination.
8. The recession forces cutbacks at a range of faith-related

organizations—houses of worship, colleges and seminaries, relief agencies and publishing houses.

9. The Episcopal Church's General Convention votes to end a moratorium on installing gay bishops, disregarding a request from the archbishop of Canterbury.

10. President Obama's inauguration features controversial prayers by evangelical megachurch pastor Rick Warren and civil rights veteran Joseph Lowery, as well as a pre-ceremony prayer by gay Episcopal Bishop V. Gene Robinson.