

Religion reporters name same-sex marriage top story of year

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—The Supreme Court ruling that prompted the White House to light up like a giant rainbow made the top slot in the Religion Newswriters Association's annual ranking of the 10 most important religion news stories of the year.

Same-sex marriage legalized

In late June, the Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges* to make same-sex marriage the law of the land. Members of the Religion Newswriters Association, an organization of professional journalists who cover religion, named it the most important religion news story of the year.

That's quite a feat in a year that included the European migrant crisis; the rise of ISIS; growing anti-Islamic rhetoric, especially among political candidates; and a papal visit to the East Coast. Those stories ranked second, third, fourth and fifth, respectively.

Also cracking the top 10 from a list of 26 major stories were the Paris terror attacks (ranked sixth), Pope Francis' encyclical on climate change (seventh), the Charleston church shootings (eighth), the support of the #BlackLivesMatter movement from religious leaders (ninth) and Pope Francis' ongoing agenda to push for change and reform in the Catholic Church.

Big year for the pope

It was a good year for Pope Francis, according to religion reporters.

Association members also named him their Newsmaker of the Year for the third year in a row.

“The U.S. Supreme Court’s landmark decision will have repercussions in the religious world for years to come, so it’s fitting that journalists ranked it the No. 1 story,” said Debra L. Mason, executive director of Religion Newswriters Foundation and director of the Center on Religion & the Professions at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.

“Pope Francis’ impact and ability to drive news is clear from the number of major news stories in which he was a central player, from his visit to the U.S. to his encyclical on the environment. He was clearly the top religious newsmaker.”

Other stories in the list of 26 include the San Bernardino shootings (11), the rise of Kentucky county clerk Kim Davis as a Christian hero (12), the Mormon church’s rejection of its gay and lesbian members (18) and the deaths of more than 2,000 people in a stampede in Saudi Arabia during the annual hajj (20).

The Religion Newswriters Association conducted its survey among its 480 members, mostly journalists working in the United States.