

On Friday, December 11, the [Religion Newswriters Association](#) polled its active members and identified the following as the top ten religion news stories of 2009.

1. President Obama pledges a new beginning in Muslim–United States relations and reaches out to the world's Muslims during a major speech at Cairo University.

2. Healthcare reform, the number one topic in Congress for most of the year, involves faith-based groups appealing strongly for action to help “the least of these,” and others, such as the Roman Catholic bishops, for restrictions on abortion funding.

3. Because Major Nidal Hasan, the accused gunman in the Fort Hood massacre, was considered a devout Muslim, the role of that faith in terrorism again comes under review; some fear a backlash.

4. Dr. George Tiller, regarded as the country's leading abortion doctor, is gunned down while acting as an usher in his Wichita Lutheran church. Scott Roeder, charged with his murder, is described as a man suffering from delusions and professing radical religious beliefs.

5. Mormons in California come under attack from some supporters of gay rights because of their lobbying efforts in the November 2008 election on behalf of Proposition Eight, which outlawed gay marriage. Later in the year, Iowa, Vermont, and New Hampshire approve gay marriage, but it is overturned by voters in Maine.

6. President Obama receives an honorary degree and gives the commencement speech at Notre Dame after fierce debates occur at the Roman Catholic university over Obama's views on abortion.

7. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America votes to ordain gay and lesbian clergy who are in a committed monogamous relationship, leading a number of conservative churches — known as the Coalition for Renewal — to move toward forming a new denomination.

8. The recession forces cutbacks at a great variety of faith-related organizations — houses of worship, relief agencies, colleges and seminaries, and publishing houses.

9. The Episcopal Church Triennial Convention votes to end a moratorium on installing gay

bishops, ignoring a request from the archbishop of Canterbury. At year's end Los Angeles chooses a lesbian, Mary Glasspool, as assistant bishop. Earlier, an elected bishop in Upper Michigan, Kevin Thew Forrester, is rejected because of his extreme liberal views.

10. President Obama's inauguration includes a controversial invocation by Rick Warren and a controversial benediction by Joseph Lowery, as well as a pre-ceremony prayer by gay Bishop Gene Robinson.

Editor's Note: Information for this article was provided by the Religion Newswriters Association. For the complete article, [click here](#) (Last accessed July 13, 2010).