

# Top 10 Religion News Stories of 2012

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Journalists vote for contraception fight as top 2012 U.S. religion story, pick Cardinal Dolan as top newsmaker.

The No. 1 U.S. religion story in December 2012 was, without a doubt, the school attack and the mournful search for meaning that follows.

However, before the shooting, professional journalists who cover religion voted on the year's other significant religious events.

The U.S. Catholic bishops' opposition to national health care legislation mandating contraception coverage was ranked the No. 1 Religion Story of 2012 by members of the Religion Newswriters Association.

Related to the top story, the top religion newsmaker was Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, who became the point man for Catholic objections to required coverage of contraception, sterilization and morning after drugs in Obamacare.

## **The Top 10 Religion Stories of the Year are below:**

1. U.S. Catholic bishops lead opposition to Obamacare requirement that insurance coverage for contraception be provided for employees. The government backs down a bit, but not enough to satisfy the opposition.
2. A Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life survey shows that "nones" is the fastest-growing religious group in the United States, rising to 19.6 percent of the population.
3. The circulation of an anti-Islam film trailer, "Innocence of Muslims," causes unrest in several countries, leading to claims that it inspired the fatal attack on a U.S. consulate in Libya. President Obama, at the U.N., calls for toleration tolerance of blasphemy, and respect as a two-way street.
4. Mitt Romney's Mormon faith turns out to be a virtual non-issue for white evangelical voters, who support him more strongly than they did John McCain, in the U.S. presidential race.
5. Monsignor William Lynn of Philadelphia becomes the first senior Catholic official in the U.S. to be found guilty of covering up priestly child abuse; later Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City, Mo., becomes the first bishop to be found guilty of it.
6. The Vatican criticizes the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, an umbrella group of U.S. nuns, alleging they haven't supported church teaching on abortion, sexuality or women's ordination.

7. Voters OK same-sex marriage in Maine, Maryland and Washington, bringing the total approving to nine states and the District of Columbia. Also, Minnesota defeats a ban on same-sex marriage after North Carolina approves one.

8. The Episcopal Church overwhelmingly adopts a trial ritual for blessing same-sex couples. Earlier, the United Methodists fail to vote on approving gay clergy, and the Presbyterians (USA) vote to study, rather than sanction same-sex marriage ceremonies.

9. Six people are killed and three wounded at worship in a Sikh temple in suburban Milwaukee. The shooter, an Army veteran killed by police, is described as a neo-Nazi.

10. Southern Baptist Convention elects without opposition its first black president, the Rev. Fred Luter of New Orleans.

### **Votes for the 2012 Religion Newsmaker of the Year ranked the five potential candidates in this order:**

1. Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York becomes a point man for Catholic objections to required coverage of contraception, sterilization and morning after drugs in Obamacare. But Dolan also took heat from the right when he invites the President to the traditional Al Smith Dinner in New York.

2. Fred Luter, first black president of the sprawling Southern Baptist Convention, who is expected to help the SBC become more racially diverse.

3. Mark Basseley Youssef, an Egypt-born Christian whose work has been condemned by the Coptic Church, provoked rioting in the Muslim world with his film trailer "Innocence of Muslims." He was jailed in California on probation violations.

4. Mormon voters, who enthusiastically backed one of their own for president, acted in ways that helped overcome suspicions of them by other faiths.

5. Pro football quarterback Tim Tebow, whose book about his faith was on the best-seller list, inspired the term "Tebowing" for kneeling in prayer and led to polarized discussions about the role of faith in sports.

The Top 10 poll of Religion Newswriters Association members took place Dec. 11- 15, 2012, in a confidential, online ballot. More than 100 members of the organization responded. RNA has conducted the poll for nearly 40 years.