

Christian Leaders Criticize 'Misrepresentation' of Obama's Faith

A group of more than 70 prominent ministers defended President Obama against what they call a "misrepresentation" of his Christian faith.

Bishop T.D. Jakes, Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter, World Vision President Rich Stearns and the Rev. Sammy Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, were among the signatories to an open letter released this week challenging a pervasive belief that the president is a Muslim.

A Pew Research poll last week found that 18 percent of Americans believe the president is a Muslim, up from 11 percent in March 2009. Only 34 percent of Americans think the president is a Christian, down from 48 percent last year, and 43 percent said they don't know what faith he practices.

In their letter, the leaders said the president has been "unwavering" in confessing Christ as his Savior and has spoken often about the importance of his faith.

"Many of the signees on this letter have prayed and worshipped with this President," the letter stated. "We believe that questioning, and especially misrepresenting, the faith of a confessing believer goes too far."

The leaders said the president's faith is not a political issue, noting that they come from diverse political backgrounds. "We are unified in our belief in Jesus Christ," they wrote. "As Christian pastors and leaders, we believe that fellow Christians need to be an encouragement to those who call Christ their Savior, not question the veracity of their

faith.”

Responding to the Pew poll, White House spokesman Bill Burton last week said the president is “obviously” a Christian and prays every day.

“There’s a group of pastors that he takes counsel from on a regular basis,” Burton said. “And his faith is very important to him, but it’s not something that is a topic of conversation every single day.”

Iowa Republican national committeewoman Kim Lehman made headlines this week for a Twitter message in which she said she believes the president truly is a Muslim.

Responding to a Politico article about the Pew poll, Lehman wrote last week: “@politico you’re funny. They must pay you a lot to protect Obama. BTW he personally told the muslims that he IS a muslim. Read his lips.”

In an interview Monday with the *Des Moines Register*, Lehman said she was referring to a speech Obama made in Cairo last year in which he sought to reach out to the Muslim world. She said the speech “just had the appearance that he was aligning himself with the Muslims,” the *Register* reported.

In an interview with CNN, Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham and founder of the Christian aid organization Samaritan’s Purse, said the president may be viewed as a Muslim because his father had an Islamic background.

“I think the president’s problem is that he was born a Muslim,” Graham said. “His father was a Muslim, the seed of Islam is passed through the father. ... The Islamic world sees the president as one of theirs.”

“But Obama has accepted Jesus Christ,” he added. “That’s what he says he has done. So I just have to believe that the president is what he has said.”

Burton said the president would talk about his faith in the future. "But the president's top priority here isn't making sure that Americans know what a devout Christian he is, it's making sure that we're getting the economy on track and we're creating jobs in this country," he said.