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**President Obama's Subdued Religion Seems More Real**

*President Obama will sign a proclamation Thursday recognizing National Day of Prayer, but he won't follow President Bush's practice of hosting a related event at the White House. Should he do neither? Both? Should there be an official National Day of Prayer?*

Proclamation, YES; related event at the White House, NO.

1.....The President's dual decision conforms to his subdued use of religion, in contrast to his immediate predecessor's obtrusive use of it. Like Lincoln, he speaks his faith in few words and does not make a show of it. Accordingly, both he and it seem more real.

2.....The first humanist (atheist or agnostic) President - if we ever have one - will not proclaim a National Day of Prayer. About half of us Americans don't know what the President's religion is, and - if he were never to proclaim a National Day of Prayer - some would conclude that he has no religion. I'm not suggesting that this was a motive in the proclamation, but it is a contingent factor.

3.....The President is in the best position to know and feel the somber depths and complexity of the "seven or eight" crises America is facing. (He says "seven or eight," in contrast to most incoming Presidents' "two or three.") He ends his frequent phone calls to spiritual advisers with "Let's pray." Prayer is communion with God, and it's for easy times and hard times. How natural that Obama, now in these deepening hard times, call America's attention to prayer by proclaiming an "official" National Day of Prayer.

4.....To use a line from an old gospel spiritual, every human being is "standin' in the need of prayer." As an evangelical liberal Christian, President Obama is humbly and intensely aware that he has this need. And he is daily in the prayers of many of us Americans.

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  MAY 4, 2009; 9:58 PM ETSAVE & SHARE:  [Send E-mail](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/emailalink?sent=no&link=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html&title=President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real)   [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/sharer.php?u=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html&t=President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real)   [Twitter](http://twitter.com/home?status=President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real%20-%20http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html)   [Digg](http://digg.com/submit?phase=2&url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html&title=President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real)   [Yahoo Buzz](http://buzz.yahoo.com/buzz?publisherurn=washington_po284&guid=washington_po284:http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html)   [Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/post?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html;&title=President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real%20-%20On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog;)   [StumbleUpon](http://www.stumbleupon.com/submit?url=http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html)   [Technorati](http://technorati.com/search/http:/onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2009/05/president_obamas_subdued_religion_seems_more_real.html)    
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Glade, you’re hilarious, specially your last paragraphs when you show your truer colours. I usually agree with your comments, the only thing I would add here is that I don’t think Obama’s move is strictly political. I think he’s also trying to fit his own character into the equation. So did Bush, I mean, he was a cowboy and he couldn’t hide it. Same thing with BO, I don’t know if we’ve seen his true colour yet but he does seem like a man of faith who knows the disadvantage of mixing church & state. Consequently, I don't think he will ever cross this line.

Hi Farny, what do you think? Does a president actually show an aspect of his character in the way he does things? Or can a president conceal his character all along the way and do strictly politics?

**POSTED BY: BIOS | MAY 8, 2009 11:35 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Bios%20%20|%20%20President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real%20%20|%20%204677086&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4677086%26blog_id=618)

Rev.,

I have no problem with Obama or anyone else praying whenever they wish with whomever they wish.

However, I have big problem with National Prayer Day.

It is highly intrusive, and I resent it deeply, from the core of my secular citizenship, which, I fear, is in danger.

Take it from one who comes from a quasi-theocratic state, Reverend. Read the signs.

Farnaz

**POSTED BY: FARNAZ1MANSOURI1 | MAY 6, 2009 6:28 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20Farnaz1Mansouri1%20%20|%20%20President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real%20%20|%20%204669494&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4669494%26blog_id=618)

"How natural that Obama, now in these deepening hard times, call America's attention to prayer by proclaiming an "official" National Day of Prayer"

Natural or not, what actual purpose does it serve? Will anyone who doesn't pray already now start? Will the debt get paid down with manna from heaven? Will the aggressors in Afghanistan and Pakistan lay down their weapons?   
It's pandering, pure and simple. There is no government 'need' to declare a 'national day of prayer'. The proclamation solves no problems. Mr. Obama likely used the proclamation because of either politics or tradition, or both. He would probably anger many of the already edgy devout christians that supported him had he failed to continue the practice. There's little to lose by offending the relatively few in the country that do not agree the proclamation is appropriate. We're accustomed to being ignored in the halls of power.  
He stopped GWB's practice of loading up the halls with preachers on this contrived holiday, probably a shrewd political compromise.

This is about politics, not god, not christianity, not religion in general. I can see it as nothing more than a strictly political maneuver, and a fluffy, muddled and 'middle of the road' position at that.

Any true religious person will put faith over politics and stand his ground.(and likely never get elected) A true politician puts his wetted finger in the wind and measures it against his base. He indeed made the right call for his poll numbers and his supporters.

Frankly I don't care about the president's private faith, that's his business. I care about his policies and plans, period. He's the president, the CEO of the government, not my dad, my teacher, my friend, or my mentor.

**POSTED BY: GLADERUNNER | MAY 6, 2009 5:10 PM**[**REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**](mailto:blogs@washingtonpost.com?subject=On%20Faith%20Panelists%20Blog%20%20|%20%20gladerunner%20%20|%20%20President%20Obama's%20Subdued%20Religion%20Seems%20More%20Real%20%20|%20%204669464&body=%0D%0D%0D%0D%0D================%0D?__mode=view%26_type=comment%26id=4669464%26blog_id=618)

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