

A Christmas Name for Every Sunday

December 25, 2016

For some time now, I have been collecting church names. I have made up categories for these names. I want to share with you some of what I've found. I think you'll find it interesting.

There are a number of **Numbered Churches** in our country. The number usually means the order at which the church was started in a particular city. The First Baptist Church was the first Baptist church started in that city. Second Baptist was the second Baptist church. And on it goes.

For example there is Second Methodist Church, Knoxville, TN, Fifth Baptist Church, Richmond, VA, and Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, PA.

Then there are **Named-for-Cities, Towns, or Areas Churches**.

In North Myrtle Beach, there is a church named Barefoot Church. It was named for the area in which it or originally started, called Barefoot Landing.

Revelation 2:8 (NIV) "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Usually there was only one church in a town or city in the beginning of the church. And so it was common to refer to the church at that place. It would be interesting to know how they differentiated in those days as additional churches formed in the large cities. They might have had to get creative like people do today.

In fact, I think, some churches should not pick a name based on the area. For example, would you go to a boring church... on purpose? There is a church by the name of Boring United Methodist Church. It is in Boring MD. Did you know we have a place in Maryland that is known for being boring? It is in Baltimore County.

There is a town in Garret County, Maryland named Accident. And there is an Accident Baptist Church in that town. But they named the church Accident intentionally. That's irony for you.

There is a wide spot in the road on HWY 24 in NW Alabama called "Burnout" and there is a Burnout Missionary Baptist Church in the area. Sometimes I feel that way, but I don't think I'd name the church that. I mean how visitors are going to be attracted to burnout church?

There are some things you can't be certain of these days. Maybe that is why there is The Church of Uncertain, in Uncertain, TX.

But wait, I have even more interesting churches. Did you know there is a church of Godzilla? Actually it is the Church of God, Zillah, in Zillah WA. They even have a wire statue that they had put together about ten years ago.

Or how about this one, Hell for Certain Church, in Hell for Certain, KY. I wonder if their yellow pages ad read, "Come to Hell For Certain this Sunday." The area known as Hell for Certain is not a town. But there Hell for Certain Road paralleled by Hell for Certain Creek near Dryhill, KY.

Then there is the Big Ugly Free Will Baptist Church. This is named for the "Big Ugly" area in Lincoln County, WV. There is a state nature preserve there by the name of Big Ugly Nature Preserve. There is also a Big Ugly Road, though it looks pretty small on the map. I cannot find the church as still existing on the internet, but it was said to have existed at one time. And an old story connected to it is that a visiting evangelist remarked on the first night of a revival how thrilled he was to be with "you Big Ugly people" for the coming week.

Back to categories, there are **Churches Named for Roads, Streets, etc.**
In our own county we have College Parkway Baptist Church.

One of the more challenging features of a church named for a road occurs when that road gets a name change. My first semester at seminary I attended a service at Walnut Street Baptist Church, which was a little difficult to find as Walnut Street no longer exists in Louisville, KY. They changed the name to that of a famous boxer born there, Mohammed Ali Blvd.

There are **Churches Named for Bodies of Water.** Some of these include
Lake Arlington Baptist church
Dean Swamp Baptist Church
Abner Creek Baptist Church (in SC)
Lakeshore Baptist Church

Other Location Referenced Churches

Airport Baptist Church
Mountain View Church
Beach Island Baptist Church
Johnson Ferry Baptist Church

Romans 16:3-5 (NIV) Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. Greet also the church that meets at their house.

There are **Churches that use Place Names from the Bible.** These include Bethlehem, Bethel, Calvary, Macedonia, Mt. Pisgah, Zion, and lots more.

Biblical Imagery Church Names

Cornerstone Baptist Church
Grace
Trinity
Faith Baptist Church
Open Door
Living Water
Fellowship
Open Heart
Ebenezer

One of the newest categories is **Affinity Group Churches.** These are churches named for the group they are trying to attract, such as Freedom Biker Church, in York, Pa, Circle J Cowboy Church, in Texarkana, Texas, and Arabic Baptist Church, in Washington, DC.

Churches Named For a Person

Many Catholic and orthodox churches use names from the Bible, especially an apostle name. But others do too. There is a St. John Baptist Church in Columbia, MD.

The most unusual is named for a woman in the Bible. There are several Weeping Mary Baptist Churches scattered across the country.

And then there is a local one. Waugh Chapel Road always struck me as an odd name, seeing as there is no Waugh chapel or church anywhere on it. Some years back my wife and I were needing passport photos and contacted a photographer who had lived in Gambrells for a long time. He told us that many, many years ago a church building sat where Four Seasons Elementary School now sits. And it was named after the first pastor, whose name was Waugh. So it was the Waugh Chapel. And that little cemetery across the street from the school was associated with that church.

There are **Life Stage Churches**. Here they hope something will happen to you. We have Awaken Church, Life Change Church, New Life Church, and New Beginning Church.

There are **Something They Hope Is True of Them Churches**.

Friendship Church Harmony Baptist Church Open Arms Baptist Church
There used to be a church named Rapture Ready Baptist Church in a South Carolina town. I don't think it is still there.

And here is another one that you have to say carefully. Depending on how you say it, it sounds like they have no faith at all. Is it the Faith Free... Lutheran Church, or the Faith... Free Lutheran Church? Probably the latter.

A couple of really unusual church names I have come across are these two. Be the Message Church, in Fontana, CA, and probably my all-time favorite church name: Scum of The Earth Church. This is a church for unchurched people in Denver, CO.

Churches with Church at the Beginning. A few examples are The Church at Severn Run or The Church at Brook Hills, which is in Birmingham, AL. A common such name is Church on the Rock. There is one of these just up the road in Millersville.

Another category might be **Churches That Don't Use Church** at all. Calvary Christian Center, Last word Fellowship, Jubilee Christian Ministries, Greater Grace World Outreach, Anointed Tabernacle, Christ's Restoration Assembly, Eternal Truth Deliverance, God's Miracle House, Greater Hope Cathedral,

The most common church name is "First Baptist." There are over 5,000 churches in the United States with this name. Of course, this name by itself does not specify which Baptist denomination.

I don't know what the longest name for a church is, but this one has to be close. There used to be a church in Waco, Texas named "Pentecostal Cathedral of Faith Church of God in Christ."

Well there is one name I am very familiar with for a church. It is the name of our church, Emmanuel. In the United States, there are 1,318 churches that use some spelling of the name Emmanuel. Among those are 537 Emmanuel Baptist Churches.

To most people driving down Waugh Chapel Road, Emmanuel is just a name. Most of them do not know what it means. They do not know that it is in the Bible. Nor do they know that it has a place in the Christmas story. It is in Matthew's gospel. In the midst of the recounting of the angel speaking to Joseph about Mary, it says...

Matthew 1:22-23 (NIV) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us."

The word Emmanuel is Hebrew and means "God with us." God points us to the messianic prophecy from Isaiah 7:14. It had a double fulfillment. It was fulfilled once in the Old Testament, and finds its second fulfillment in the birth of Jesus. He was the incarnation of God, God made flesh. And so they called him the Son of God, Emmanuel, God with us.

And that raises a question. Why did they name him Jesus and not Emmanuel? Emmanuel was more of a title or nickname. Let me give several examples of calling someone by a title other than their name. The baseball legend, Babe Ruth, was called "The Sultan of Swat." This was a nickname, something that described his batting ability. It was not literally a name change. In the same way Elvis Presley is called the King of Rock and Roll, and George Washington is called "The Father of Our Nation". These are all titles, not personal names given by their parents. But they designate something important about each person.

Emmanuel is the right title for Jesus. Jesus IS God with us. Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with us always, even after His return to heaven. He sent the Holy Spirit, who communicates Jesus' will to us.

We need God with us. Moses knew this long ago. When the Israelites were still in the wilderness Moses spoke to God about the coming trip to the Promised Land. Moses told God, "You have not said who is going to go there with us. If you, Yahweh, do not go with us, then don't send us there." Moses knew they needed God with them. And we need God with us too.

I pray regularly that you will experience God's presence in worship here. I pray that God will manifest Himself to you when you come on Sundays. We gather together to praise His name and to thank Him. And He has promised to be with us when two or three are gathered in His name. But I hope for more than His presence. I pray that He will make His presence known to the heart and spirit of each person present.

And I encourage you to **Pray that people will leave here thinking, "I met God there."**

Pray that as you pray for your church. That is what we want to have happen. Because if people meet God, they will be changed. They will be drawn to Jesus.

What child is this? This is Emmanuel. This is the incarnation. This is God with us!