

## Church Names (2014)

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

I think most of the big-name churches I've heard about have very poor names, which may be part of their problem. The one I'm part of may lead the list, which means that I can chide some others as well. The word "Presbyterian," in case you haven't heard, means "run by old guys," in Greek, and that's hardly an example of good marketing.

But there are others, almost as bad. What does "Methodist" mean? -- "People with a way of doing things." What way? That's really not very descriptive. Another is TOO descriptive: do Baptists really want to be known by that one solitary feature of the way they do things, which is applying a lot of water to their believers, especially since they ought to be called "immersionists," if you want to be really correct. Or maybe "Dippers." "Lutherans?" That label may identify the guy that gave them their start, but it really tells absolutely nothing about what they do or what they say. Even the name of the biggest chunk of us all, the Catholics, doesn't tell very much, when you unpack the original meaning, which is, "Big, broad, and wide." Sorta like The Big Tent.

How about what they call the place you go to for worship? Does it really attract people to come, or is it just a reminder of some argument of the past?

I wonder if churches would be better off if they had a name that told what business they are actually in. I saw the perfect one awhile back, but unfortunately that means it's already taken. I passed a trim, efficient looking building with a big sign across the front that reads, "Huntsville Fire and Rescue." Now there's a label that tells it right. Where is it? Huntsville, that's where. What does it do? Rescues, that's what, from whatever threatens or impedes. And what's it like, what's its main characteristic? -- Fire, that's what! Burning with passion, ablaze with excitement, willing to see itself burned up in order to accomplish what it's meant to do, that's the name of that tune!

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The Rev. Houston Hodges is mostly retired, but works as much as he wants to at a church named for its location, the Big Cove Presbyterian Church.