

What's hot and not in Episcopal church names: Lots of saints

by [John Dart](#) in the [June 1, 2004](#) issue

The most popular names of Episcopal parishes in the U.S. are in a virtual three-way tie between churches with the word Christ (527), St. John (524) or Trinity (520) on their signs, according to a Michigan priest who recently launched a computer-aided search through the denomination's annual *Red Book*.

St. Paul appears in church names 488 times. The fifth-most-common (311 times) name is St. Andrew, a disciple not prominent in the New Testament but important as the patron saint of Scotland.

"The first U.S. Episcopal priest to be ordained bishop was Samuel Seabury in 1784, but because England would not do it Seabury went to Scotland to be consecrated," said Chris Yaw, associate rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Battle Creek. "Since then the Episcopal Church has had a special relationship with the Scots as reflected in our hymnody, liturgy and in our church's flag and insignia."

The sixth-through-tenth places—all with more than 200 occurrences—are held by Grace, St. James, St. Luke, St. Mark and All Saints. St. Peter (11th) and St. Mary (12th) follow. Among the 7,500 Episcopal churches, the name Jesus appears only 11 times, for a rank of number 78 on the list.

Episcopalians of the past who named their churches after biblical events often preferred Ascension or Epiphany, tied at 22nd with 91 churches each. "This was not Mel Gibson's crowd," said Yaw, noting that Crucifixion is in a nine-way tie for last place with two occurrences.

"Of faith, hope and love," he said, "the greatest of these is not love." Faith is part of the name on 14 churches, and Hope occurs six times. Love was another one of the last-place finishers, he said.