

# St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church Blues

La Dispute

Stained-glass and the choir sing out that strong and ceaseless chorus here.  
So sweet the voices, sweep like leaves into the street.  
On Eastern, a celebration carried on for God and hope and refuge  
To keep each other, life; give shelter from the storm. And keep warm.  
The congregation gathers outside in the parking lot, each service done  
They keep the old hymn rolling on and on and  
I see the scene in color each day driving out to Eastown,  
That old abandoned church and have I gone the same sad way?

Have I gone the same sad way?

Through the sixties flourished and the seventies in flux.  
The eighties fluctuate each year unclear of when the money would dry up.  
And when the nineties violent crime and rising unemployment rates came by  
That parking lot grew dim and thin of sinners and saints  
Until the voices, unceasing, slowly faded to black  
Until the weeds stormed the concrete from unattended cracks.  
It had to know, had to feel that glory never coming back,  
Like I could feel it when the passion left, the last of what I had,  
It had to know like I knew.  
And I can't find it still.  
Might not ever.

Ten years now standing vacant.  
Ten years on empty, maybe more.  
Once held the faith of hundreds,  
Soon one more cell phone store.  
For years they gathered here  
Inside the building sound and true  
To sing their praises to a god that gave them hope  
To carry on, to carry through.  
So, I've been thinking about that,  
Sometimes go slow when I drive by,  
How a home of stone and a house so holy  
Grows so empty over time.  
What gave those people purpose  
Past death approaching constantly  
Now left to crumble slowly,  
Now left to wither with the weeds.  
Now left to ice and vandals,  
The advent candles long since gone,  
The old foundation shifting hard,  
The concrete overgrown, but  
That stained-glass window sits untouched amongst the brickwork worn,  
A symbol of the beauty only perfect at that moment we were born.  
And just the other day I swear I saw a man there  
Pulling weeds out of the concrete, sweeping up and patching cracks,  
I saw him lift a rag to wash the years of filth from off those windows.  
Made me wonder if there's anyone like that for you and me and  
Anybody else who broke and lost hope.