

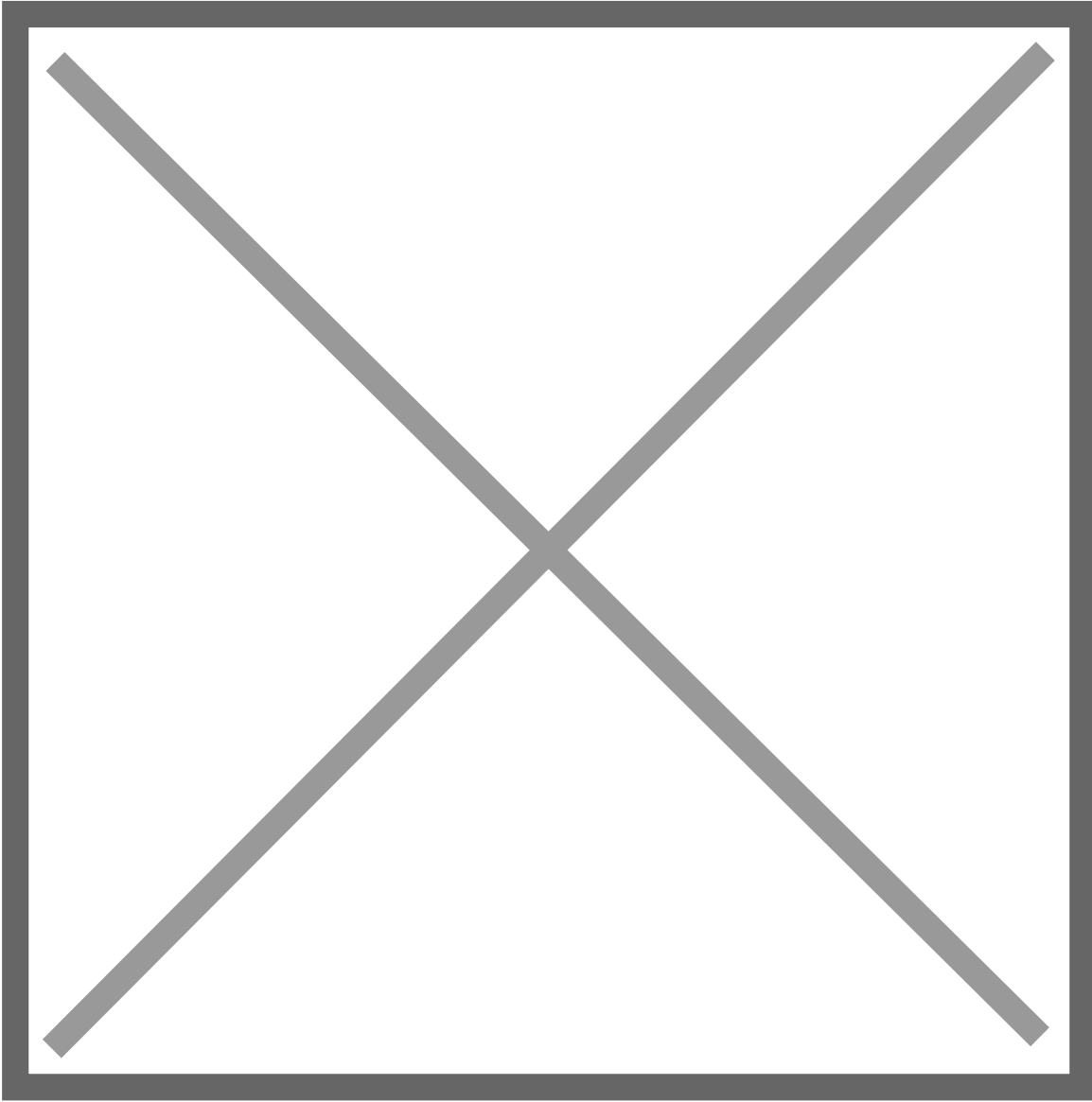
## Church photos in the *Smithsonian*

By [Debra Bendis](#)

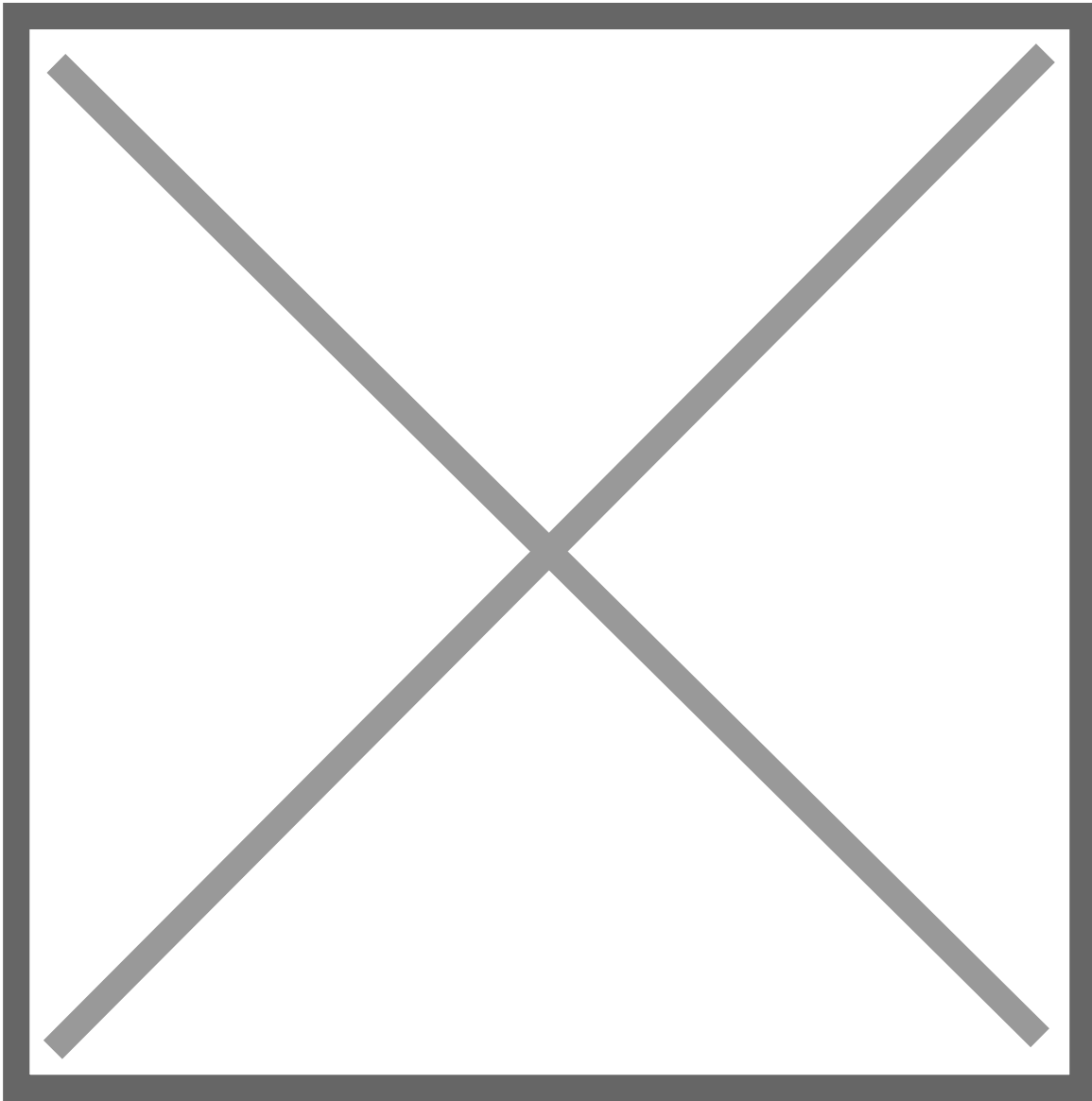
April 14, 2014

*Smithsonian* magazine has announced the finalists in its annual photo contest. You can see them [at the \*Smithsonian's\* site](#), where voting for the Readers' Choice Winner is open till May 6. All the photos are worth a look.

But most striking of all, for *Century* readers, may be two portraits of churches. One is Peter Zajfrid's photo of a tiny chapel by the side of the road in Slovenia:



The other, by Michael Frank, is of the sanctuary of the abandoned Woodward Avenue Presbyterian Church in Detroit:



Frank's image—submitted in the “altered” category—is stunning with its many textures, lines, and sepia tones. The church's arches still lead the eye to the ceiling, where light coming through from windows adds a golden cast. The colors of stained glass gleam like miniature jewels, while an alcove to the left—with water-damaged walls and a painted cross—seems part of a Romanesque abbey.

But from the point of view of a Christian who loves congregations, the photo speaks of other things: the demise of denominations, the grief over a church closing, and a dreadful, empty silence.

What do you see?

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