



## St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Florence, New Jersey

### Having Faith.

This small board and batten chapel was built in 1836 and had already served seven generations when arsonists set it on fire. The chancel area had burned and portions of the floor, walls, ceiling, and stained glass windows had been destroyed. Great care was taken to preserve as many of the original elements as possible. And luckily, photographs of the windows existed, so artisans were able to recreate the stained glass exactly.

During the fire repairs, it was discovered that the sill plates had suffered from insect infestation, rot, and age. But replacing them wouldn't be easy, as the wooden structure of the Church sat on a foundation above a very tight crawlspace. This required crawling underneath the structure and leveling areas of the earth by hand to set the hydraulic jacks properly.

Surgical precision was necessary to carefully elevate the historic structure. One manageable section was elevated at a time to ensure that the exterior wall structure was supported and that the interior plaster would not crack or fail. Once elevated, the decayed sill plate was removed and replaced with new timber. Jacks were slowly released to ease the building back down, and the surrounding structural members were attached to the new sill plate. This process was repeated section by section until all the damaged structure was replaced.

