



Sarah Bentley-Korff says there are already potential buyers interested in Waitara's Methodist Church.
PHOTO: SIMON O'CONNOR/FAIRFAX NZ

God's house goes under the sale hammer

TARYN UTIGER

For more than 140 years it's been a house of God, but it could soon be home to flatmates, friends or even performance troupes.

After closing its doors last year, Waitara's Methodist Church has been listed for sale on the open market.

Sarah Bentley-Korff of Professionals Real Estate has been tasked with the job of selling the old church and said she was delighted to have the rare opportunity.

"The Waitara Methodist Church was established in 1875,

and it closed its doors last year, after running for 140 years," she said.

"To get the opportunity to sell something that has so much history and character is really exciting. I am really looking forward to it."

Bentley-Korff said it took her a while to get her head around the idea of selling a church.

"It feels quite odd, coming in and saying, let's sell a church. Churches definitely don't come up very often. It's quite unheard of.

"I had to do a bit of research into how I was going to market it, and how we are going to portray it.

"I had a look at a few others

"People would have been married here, and there would have been plenty of funeral celebrations."

Sarah Bentley-Korff

around the country and there have been quite a few in recent years start to sell, especially in smaller communities where they don't necessarily have the following anymore.

"Those ones are getting turned into beautiful properties that are keeping all of the traditional features of the church."

Bentley-Korff said as well as being transformed into a home there were endless possibilities for the site.

"You could house 50-odd people here," she said.

"There could be multiple dwellings, multiple units, but I'd absolutely love to see it go to a club or some sort of organisation. There's been talks of it potentially being a theatre or something like that. There's just so many possibilities."

The original church was

relocated to Waitara in the late 1800s from Belt Rd in New Plymouth.

From there a hall was added on, as well as a lounge, a kitchen, and a separate office and children's club house.

"When you think about the amount of stories these walls could tell. You would have had all sorts," Bentley-Korff said.

"I'm sure people would have been married here, and there would have been plenty of funeral celebrations, no doubt."

The GV of the property is \$280,000, the land is freehold and expressions of interest close on September 21.