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Church takes next step in upgrade plan

By: WHITE Shane

The Knox Presbyterian Church in Waitara has put out a tender for the demolition of its 97-year-old auditorium as part of a \$2.4 million upgrade to its facilities.

The church hall, lounge and office areas, which were added on more recently, are being removed but the concrete auditorium, which has no Historic Places Trust protection, cannot be moved and therefore has to be demolished.

Session clerk Graham Armstrong said no date had been set for the demolition but it was expected to be in August, and the church hoped to have the new development completed by next May.

Mr Armstrong said \$1.9 million had been raised for the project so far, including \$1 million pledged by Knox's members, and the church was looking to raise a further \$500,000. "We're approaching local trusts, local businesses, and church members [for the remaining funds]," he said.

Minister Dennis Flett said membership had been steadily growing at Knox, which could not fit everyone into the auditorium for services.

"We have had people waiting in the foyer on Sunday mornings."

The new development will be able to accommodate 280 worshippers.

Mr Armstrong said that over the past 15 years the church had tried many strategies to fit more people in.

"We've tried running two services, getting smaller chairs and reducing the size of our old chairs."

Mr Flett said while it could be frustrating to perform services elsewhere while the building work was being carried out, he was very excited about the church's future.

"We are in the middle of change, we've got momentum. The frustration is minor compared to the excitement," he said.

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CAPTION:

New beginnings: An artist's impression of the \$2.4 million redevelopment of the Knox Presbyterian Church in Waitara.

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