

Church for Butler museum

St Stephen's Methodist Church, Lepperton, has a new owner.

The church trust has decided to give the 95-year-old building to private museum owner Mr Fred Butler, who will move it to his museum near the Lepperton turn-off from the New Plymouth - Waitara highway within three months.

The trust secretary, Mr S. W. Hooper, said last night the church was offered to Mr Butler after the Ngaere Gardens Pioneer Village Society failed to exercise its option to remove the building.

"A condition of disposal is that the church be preserved as a historic building. We didn't want to see it demolished," he said.

The church trust will retain its half-acre Lepperton property as an appreciating asset.

Mr Butler said he could ill afford the cost of transporting the church to his museum, but it was "too beautiful to see destroyed."

The church trust will retain the right to use the solid kauri church for occasional weddings, christenings and special events, including centenary celebrations in five years.