

United Methodist Economic Ministry Thrift Shop Reopens

Rev. Michele St. Cyr and Dan Dolan

The United Methodist Economic Ministry in Salem Maine was happy to re-open its doors to excited customers who were lined up at the door in late June after a three-month closure ended. The staff reported steady foot traffic on opening day as customers practiced social distancing, with only five customers allowed in the store at a time. The Rev. Michele St. Cyr reported that customers “were just excited that we were open FINALLY! They were happy to find the store rearranged a bit, a fresh coat of paint and all new summer stock out.” She added, “We sold lots of shorts, kids, men's, infant and women's summer clothing. Treasures were found in the dishes, pots and pans and books and puzzles.”



Plexiglass barriers and other measures were taken to ensure that UMEM complied with state COVID-19 mitigation measures. When asked how does the staff feel about re-opening? Rev.



St. Cyr replied, “They were nervous about how folks would respond to the restrictions, but everyone was gracious. We are not allowed to have dressing rooms, so folks cannot try on clothes. We do have masks available for anyone that doesn't have one and hand sanitizing stations throughout the store.” The store is currently opening one hour later than normal to allow the staff time to disinfect “high touch” areas the protective measures were greatly appreciated by both staff and customers.

The UMEM Thrift shop is an important resource for thrift clothing and household items in the Salem-Strong region. The Ministry's satellite Thrift Shop in Howland Maine will be re-opening this month. In addition to the thrift shops, the Salem UMEM operates a food pantry and children's weekend lunch program supported by camp Mechuwana. The re-opening of the ministry's two thrift shops provides the ministry with an important stream of revenue to maintain daily operations. This is especially important this year as the COVID crisis forced the cancellation of visiting out-of-state mission teams that are instrumental in the ministry's housing repair program. Rev. St. Cyr reports that demand at the ministry's food pantry has seen increasing demand this summer and remains approximately 170% above pre-crisis demand levels.

For those wishing to support the UMEM with material donations, please note that the ministry is NOT accepting clothing donations at this time; however, some household items,

books and puzzles are being accepted. Please call ahead (207-678-2611) for pre-approval. Cash donations can be made by mail (UMEM, 1458 Salem Rd, Salem, ME 04983) or clicking donate at: <https://www.umeconomicministry.com/>.