



**The Strengthen the Church Offering furthers the work of our conference and the national UCC as we work together to strengthen and renew existing congregations, fund leadership development, and provide exciting new programs for youth and young adults.**

## **RENEWAL CONVERSATIONS FOR CONGREGATIONS: From Scarcity to Abundance**

**P**entecost celebrates the gift of the Holy Spirit, which empowered the earliest followers of Jesus to dream anew and envision a new future for themselves and their community.

The story of the first Pentecost – Acts 2: 1-21 – speaks to how God moves us from a mindset of scarcity to one of abundance. Many of us feel the need to make that same shift now, as the Covid-19 Pandemic triggers feelings (and fears) of scarcity.

The contrast of scarcity and abundance doesn't mean the difference between poverty and wealth. A person can be rich by any measure but still operate out of a scarcity mindset, an unquenched hunger for more. And a person can be poor but still experience abundance, seeing the world with grateful eyes, a feeling of contentedness.

The disciples woke up on that first Pentecost with minds stayed on scarcity. Fear gripped their hearts despite over forty days spent with the resurrected Jesus. They hid behind locked doors. And then God's spirit intervened: "And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them." The Holy Spirit moved them from scarcity to abundance. They went outside their locked room. Peter spoke even when people thought him drunk or foolish. The community grew bigger than they could have ever imagined. Abundance didn't mean life became easy (Peter would soon be arrested), but it did mean fear didn't rule their hearts.

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**As we come to celebrate Pentecost in 2021, how can we move from a mindset of scarcity to a mindset of abundance?**

**O**rganizing a congregational conversation can be a way to engage people in this mindset shift. Follow the local health department recommendations when planning the gathering or use a feature like Zoom's breakout rooms to create virtual small groups.

When your group gathers, acknowledge that experiences like the Covid-19 Pandemic can push us into a place of scarcity thinking. Then, recalling the first Pentecost story, name that God moves us to a place of abundance. Finally, and most importantly, invite people to reflect in small groups about three questions:

- **What has been the most challenging aspect of the pandemic so far?**
- **Where do I see hope amid it?**
- **And what have I learned about myself that I want to hold onto moving forward?**

These questions of challenge, hope, and learning can help people reflect on the experience of the last year in a way that moves them to think more abundantly.

Finally, as you wrap up the conversation time, invite people to share they experience God calling them to renewal in their life and in the life of their community.

**Listening to one another's stories helps us move as a community from scarcity to abundance.**

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**Renew!** 

