

MAIN THEME: SEASON OF CREATION

“What We Plant Outlives Us”

As-salaamu alaikum — peace be upon you. And in every language of every tradition in this room: peace to all of you.

Before I say a single word of this devotion — I invite you to close your eyes if you wish... and simply listen to this room breathe for 10 seconds — 100+ attendees here. One breath. (*hold ~10 seconds silence*)

Thank you. What you just heard (that quiet hum of life) is the oldest sound in the world. It is the sound of **creation, still being created.**

There is an ancient proverb: “**A society grows great when the old plant trees in whose shade they will never sit.**”

Hold another image with me, please. Someone kneeling in the dirt. Working the soil. Watering a seed. Knowing they will never taste its fruit, never rest in its shade. And planting it anyway.

That, my dear friends, is **legacy**. Not what we build for ourselves. What we plant for someone we may never meet.

In several traditions, September is a season of celebrating creation and the Creator. We gather in this season of creation — for people of every tradition carry some version of this same truth — **the earth is not something we own, but something we have been entrusted with.**

Every faith represented here, and every person of conscience with no tradition at all, carries some version of this same truth:

- We did not create the mountains.
- We did not teach the rivers to run.
- We did not light the stars.

We **received** all of it. As a gift. As a trust. And every gift received carries one quiet question inside it:

What will you do with what you were given?

I serve alongside many of you behind the walls of the county jails. And I have learned something there that I could not have learned anywhere else.

I have learned that creation does not only happen in gardens and forests.

Creation happens in concrete rooms. It happens when a person the world has given up on decides to begin again. It happens when someone plants patience where there was rage... hope where there was only a judgment... dignity where a number had replaced a name.

I have watched human beings, in the most unlikely soil on earth, **bloom.**

And here is what I want you to hear this afternoon — every one of you in this room is a gardener. Every visit you make, every group you lead, every hour you give, you are kneeling in the dirt, planting trees whose shade you will never sit in.

You will not see most of what grows from your work. The seed you planted on a Tuesday evening in a jail classroom may not break the surface for ten years — at a kitchen table, when a father tells his daughter, *“Someone came to see me... when no one else did.”*

You will never hear that sentence. But it will be spoken because of you.

So as I close, I ask you to do one small thing, please —

Think of **one seed** you can plant this season — whether you are inside or outside the jail. One act whose fruit you will never see. A name to remember. A door to knock on. A person to refuse to give up on. **Hold that seed in your mind.**

And now, in whatever language your heart prays — or simply in the silence we shared when we began — receive this blessing:

- **May the One who made the seasons make you patient.**
- **May the hands that were entrusted with this earth, be gentle.**
- **And may what you plant outlive you and shade generations you will never meet.**

Amen — and peace to every tradition in this room.