

MELF cohort closes by sharing gifts in Dublin

Angie Howard-McParland; Institute Justice Team

The close of summer this year also marked the end of my year-long journey with the Mercy Emerging Leaders Fellowship (MELF) as we presented our final projects and graduated at the house on Baggot Street in Dublin, Ireland. Even as I continue to reflect and discern how I can best share the gifts I received, I know that no articles or webinars will quite capture the grace of this experience. But anyone who has been able to connect with the broader Mercy world across international borders and cultures knows that it changes your work and ministry going forward with new perspectives and appreciation.



First-day project presenters in Catherine's office: Angie Howard-McParland of the Mercy Justice Team in the Americas; Pamela McLoughlin, Mercy College Coolock in Dublin; and Tatiana Diaz, Gwynedd Mercy University.

I was a member of the [fifth MELF cohort](#), following in the footsteps of dozens of other Mercy women from around the globe. Last fall, the nine of us from Colombia, Guyana, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, the Philippines, Tonga, and the United States met for the first time in-person in Siem Reap, Cambodia, where we witnessed Mercy in action at the heart of war, peace, and reconciliation. In March, we reconvened at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, learning from Cecilie Kern and the work of Mercy at the UN. Finally, we concluded our time together in Dublin,

presenting our unique justice projects from our own contexts, reflecting on the future of Mercy where it all began in Coolock and on Baggot Street, and resolving for this to be the beginning of more collaboration across the Mercy world.

Our projects ranged from creative leadership development in the Philippines to support of women and children in New Zealand to environmental education in Kenya and more. Every single fellow focused her efforts on a vulnerable population such as immigrants, elders, or youth, and, in the spirit of Catherine McAuley, worked in the local context to pull levers of influence and power to offer care and compassion. I was honored to present the work of the Mercy Justice Team in this current iteration of politics in the United States, illustrating the ways our sisters, associates, and ministries truly live out Mercy values and the Critical Concerns at this point in history.

More than anything else, this experience has strengthened my resolve to make the extra effort to connect across institutes and time zones. It is an immense gift to be part of the Mercy world and the way it adapts and serves in localities far from the red door in Dublin. While our justice work necessarily looks different around the world, the grounding in Mercy values and the commitment to making the world better today than yesterday connects us to the ministry and to one another. We all have something to learn from one another to continue Catherine's vision and, in a world in dire need of justice and mercy, we also have a responsibility to offer it wherever we are.



MELF Cohort 5 fellows with MIA staff at graduation in the classroom at Baggot Street.