



For more info on resources and the work of the Marriage Council, visit our website [marriage.ireland.anglican.org](http://marriage.ireland.anglican.org)

### **Find time for each other**

Over the last year, all of us have experienced extended periods at home, and this has led to many positive stories of people helping one another, but isolation can be a strain on all of us.

For those married, none of us could have imagined the amount of time that this would give couples together, and with the limitations on social gatherings and the pattern of working from home, we have become used to being with those we live with a lot more than normal.

Managing to keep out of each other's way when working from home, handling children's home schooling, and getting used to new ways of doing things is not something that any of us have had a lot of practice at before. This can place pressure on any relationship.

The purpose of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council is to resource the Church as it supports marriage and family life. This is done through a number of ways:

- Support for couples considering marriage, including resources to clergy for marriage preparation;
- Providing support to married couples through marriage enrichment and signposting counselling services;
- Resourcing the wider Church through training, signposting, and materials;
- Marriage support to clergy and their spouses.

This season may bring the greatest strain to our marriages, and therefore as a Council in these difficult times, we want to help couples in as many ways as possible – through our website and Facebook posts. Should you wish to contact us or find out more resources, then have a look at our website at [marriage.ireland.anglican.org](http://marriage.ireland.anglican.org)

Here are a few helpful tips for you and your partner that we have found, which we hope you find useful.

### **Working from home**

It's very easy to get caught up in much longer hours at work when your office is now at the dining table. If you are both working at home, try to agree times when you can both stop and enjoy lunch together. Also agree times when work is over and the office becomes home again. Having defined working hours will help keep work time and home time separate. Our daily temptation is to measure the success of our days by what we accomplish. But, this time of life should remind us that bearing fruit is not the same as getting things done. Galatians 5:22 reminds us that, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." May we make time for these things in the hectic nature of our work/life balance.

### **Make space for quality time together**

While you may not be able to visit your favourite restaurant or cinema, there are countless ways you can spend quality time together, though it may mean getting a little more creative. You could have some fun cooking a new meal together from scratch – and if you're not a great cook, it could be something to laugh about later.

Try walking or exercising together – keeping appropriate distances from others if you're outside, of course. Quality time together will look different to what we're used to, but it's a great chance to make some awesome memories.

### **Listen to each other**

Listening and chatting to each other, rather than staring at a TV screen or your mobile device, can be so refreshing for your relationship. You may never have chatted as much before due to separate daily routines. Taking the time to listen to each other is so important – giving your partner your undivided attention gives value to their thoughts and feelings.

### **Pray for each other**

God wants to be a part of your relationship, so don't leave him out or make him the last thing you think about. Ecclesiastes 4:12 reminds us that a cord of three strands cannot be easily broken, therefore include him. Whilst these times will be a strain on every relationship, prayer is a significant way to grow a stronger, more unified, and intimate marriage.

As a final and important issue, these periods of lockdown have unfortunately highlighted a greater number of incidents of domestic violence and abuse. This behaviour in any relationship is totally unacceptable. Remember you are not alone, and help is available through the 24-hour Domestic and Sexual Abuse helplines:

Northern Ireland – 0808 802 1414

Republic of Ireland – 1800 77 88 88

In the case of an emergency contact the Police.

*The Revd Jonny Campbell-Smyth is the Chair of the Church of Ireland Marriage Council. This article was first published in the Church of Ireland Gazette March 2021.*