

Sir,

Your correspondent Mr Anker (Letters, 18 January) has perhaps more reason than most to be aware of the unintended consequences of abbreviation. I am sure he speaks for many when he expresses confusion about the increasingly common term LGBTQIA+, so I'm pleased to be able to be both open and frank with him – although I suspect this is not, in fact, the real intention of his letter.

Using terms like LGBTQIA is for many people an important way of including all the different sexuality and gender identities whose lives, loves and gifts have for so long been ignored or worse in the long story of human history – aided and abetted by the church. Only very recently have we begun to value those whose identities lie beyond narrowly defined 'traditional marriage'. That unfolding story is both a gift and a blessing to the church, and a judgement upon the extent to which it has colluded with the oppression of our communities, and caused the kind of harm and shame which contributes to people contemplating, and on occasion succeeding in, ending their own lives. Flying a rainbow flag is a sign of reconciliation and welcome from the churches to our marginalised communities. An important, and missional, first step, which your writer's letter would suggest is still much-needed.

For over forty years, OneBodyOneFaith has affirmed that 'human sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity in all their richness are gifts of God gladly to be accepted, enjoyed and honoured'. Mutuality, respect and consent lie at the heart of that understanding, because any abuse of power is an affront to the teachings of Jesus.

That Mr Anker can even consider paedophilia alongside loving, consensual and committed relationships reveals a worrying thought process, to say the least. His tone suggests an attempt at light-hearted provocation, but he needs to be more careful. As IICSA continues its hearings, we would all do well to consider the extent to which homophobia fed the historic and mistaken conflation of same-sex relationship with paedophilia. Such prejudice has prevented us from hearing the real stories of survivors, and addressing the issues of power - in our institutions and even close at home in our families - within which abuse has gone unnoticed and unaddressed for far too long.

Yours faithfully,

Tracey Byrne

Chief Executive
OneBodyOneFaith