



Is Victoria (the world?) at War with Itself?

Where is church in the midst of this?

Last Sunday Rev Greg quoted this article from The Sunday Age. Take it as you like – a journalist's "beat up" or a factual account, the question is how, in an increasingly less 'churchy' society how can we respond to this world, especially given the new opportunities at Charman?

"There's a nasty mood festering in this state that threatens to undermine social cohesion and quality of life. It's anger: Victoria (the world? - Ed) is at war with itself. It's a battle waged by average people who are becoming more aggressive, rude, impatient, selfish and sometimes violent.

Shared values are being demolished. The concepts of a fair go, mutual respect, offering a helping hand, if not dead, are struggling for breath. There's instead a societal sourness that erupts into worsening behaviour in schools, family violence, and staff facing daily abuse or worse in hospitals, shopping centres, newsagents, dental surgeries, even vet clinics.

Why? Perhaps the rust-bucket degeneration of Victoria has stolen civic pride and replaced it with hopelessness and resentment. Or perhaps the bitterness that has dominated modern politics, blended with the anger seeping from the lockdown era, have helped create this society in danger of cracking. Yes, that's dramatic. And there remain good people doing very good things out in the world. But too often, the public mood is sour and destructive.

That's dangerous. Julie Claridge, a lawyer writing under the banner of the Centre for Independent Studies, says weakening values, and social stress are behind the obscene surge in antisemitism. *"Antisemitism should be understood as a civic warning system,"* she wrote. *"When prejudice becomes normalised, it signals that the shared values and institutions that hold a liberal democracy together are under strain."*

This should be an election issue, with a debate based on who can rebuild public confidence, decency and optimism. It won't be. Instead of dissecting the causes, we get political patches and stunts from both major parties. The ill-considered plan for PSOs in hospitals, bans on aggressive customers, harsher sentences that will never be imposed, are all likely more symbolic than effective. There's an argument, too, that the surge in support for One Nation, which by any definition presents a more simplistic, aggressive and judgmental form of politics, indicates community unease and frustration.

It's certainly a sign voters are sick of the platitudes and evasiveness of the mainstream parties. We shall see how that translates on polling day, but there's fertile ground for division and scapegoats. This is a people-driven problem. It's not entirely created by the crooks and disengaged kids, although so many of their horrendous acts are becoming normalised. Events reported daily once would have shaken the society. Now it's expected.



Within a few days recently, five youths, one aged 12, were charged over the death of a retail worker in Sunshine. A blind man was bashed in the pub, his prosthetic eyes smashed out of his face. We're desensitised to it. But put alleged criminals to one side. Violence and aggression and abuse from "average" people is now common.

The state's hospital emergency departments need almost as many security staff as doctors. There were an estimated 24,000 violent incidents in Victorian hospitals last year, a 20 per cent increase. Northern Health had 4000 – the worst in the state.

Walk into any business. There are signs warning customers not to be aggressive or violent. Is the mood so bad that the average person walking into a shop needs to be warned to be decent?

A survey by the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association found 88 per cent of members had been abused, 34 per cent did not feel safe at work and 10 per cent had been spat on. Road rage is another sign all is not well. The RACV reports rampant abuse, threats, aggressive driving and tailgating, which nearly half of drivers have experienced or witnessed.



Domestic violence has been increasing annually for a decade. Assaults in schools are reported to have tripled in three years. Even the service station has become a tense place, with queues erupting in shouting matches and threats of violence.

So where's it gone wrong?

Michael Gawenda, a former editor of this newspaper (The Age), believes Victoria has not recovered from the hideous time of COVID. Writing on Substack, he says: *"It's clear to me that Melbourne – and Victoria – has not recovered from the pandemic ... there was great anger and great hatred ... looking at where we are now, that anger and hatred has not dissipated."*

But the early days of the pandemic also provide a contrast. Initially, there was such fear and uncertainty that a sense of community and unity of purpose emerged. Early in the crisis, people were tolerant, even kind. They paid forward coffee, they placed flowers on public benches and painted rocks. They checked on neighbours.

Unions and employers promised a new era of co-operation, and politicians foreshadowed a new decency. Upon his election in 2022, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, always sniffing the wind, promised to "bring people together" and end "conflict fatigue". Briefly, we were all on the same side, invested in the broader good. It didn't last. The PM's words today ring hollow.



So, is this anger a lingering resentment for Victoria's political and legal bullying of the COVID era? Is it the pace of life, the never-ending connectivity, the cost-of-living pressure, job insecurity? Or is it a lack of strong leadership? Is it the demise of education? **Is it the slow destruction of religion?** Is it stoked by a media that follows the strategy "what bleeds leads"? Are parents too busy to instill basic morality in their children?

It's probably some of all these. But this can't be deferred. The Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion may help, but in Victoria we need to chase local answers.

Sadly, there's little chance of sensible debate around this. The first casualty of the seething anger was respectful disagreement. It's long dead. Now, there's both hope and fear. The hope is that it's not too late to revive those Australian values we once treasured and that briefly thrived during the pandemic.

The fear is that this could be the new normal.

- Neil Mitchell

Cheltenham, Mentone &
Black Rock congregations
now

Charman Uniting Church

**313 Charman Road,
Cheltenham**

You are cordially
invited to attend the



Grand Opening

of our newly Renovated Church buildings
Sunday, 20th September, 2026 at 2pm

The Cheltenham, Mentone and Black Rock congregations joyfully announce the Grand Opening of the newly renovated **Charman Uniting Church** buildings at 313 Charman Road, Cheltenham. We invite all members and friends of our Presbytery community to join us on **Sunday, 20 September 2026 at 2pm** as we celebrate this new chapter in our shared ministry and mission. It will be a wonderful opportunity to give thanks, reconnect, and look forward to the life that will grow in this renewed space. **Note: No 10am service on this day**

From Peter Hutchinson -

I'm excited to let you know about a collaboration between the Melbourne Bach Choir, in further celebration of their 20th Anniversary, and Zelman Symphony. The concert will take place at the Melbourne Recital Centre on Friday 11 September at 8pm, when choir and orchestra proudly present Brahms' **Ein Deutsches Requiem** and **Nänie Opus 82**, plus Szymanowski's **Stabat Mater** – the latter sung in Polish.

The concert promises many highlights. Our Artistic Director Rick Prakhoff states in MBC's press release, "The music of mourning has been central to European classical choral/orchestral music for centuries. Each of these three masterpieces represents deeply felt reflections on the act of mourning for the loss of family and colleagues. We bring these together as beautiful reflections on life, and exquisitely personal- musical reflections on the inevitability of death".

Performing the Stabat Mater also commemorates the 100th anniversary of the first performance of this work. The three featured soloists - soprano **Helena Dix**, mezzo-soprano **Belinda Paterson** and baritone **Warwick Fyfe** - will perform the Stabat Mater in Polish for the first time. Helena Dix has recently returned to Australia after two decades based in England and performing in opera houses in Europe and around the world, and we're thrilled she will feature with us at this concert. For the first time in its 20 years, MBC welcomes a former conducting scholar to the stage in a leading conducting role, with Jessica Zuk leading Brahms' Nänie. While Jessica previously has conducted both Zelman Symphony and Melbourne Bach Choir, this concert will be her first time leading both orchestra and an 85-voice choir together in performance. With both MBC and Zelman Symphony sounding better than ever, and with three world class soloists, this will be one of those 'not to be missed' events.

Melbourne Bach Choir have sold out their previous two concerts, including Good Friday at the MRC, so get in quick and secure your seats before they sell out!

Melbourne Recital Centre, September 11th at 8pm, Melbourne Bach Choir with Zelman Symphony. A special discount code is MBCKAROL available for you

Tickets via <https://www.melbournerecital.com.au/whats-on/current-productions/melbourne-bach-choir-brahms-requiem>

Melbourne Bach Choir Presents

MELBOURNE
BACH
CHOIR

20
YEARS
ANNIVERSARY
SEASON
2026

Brahms

Ein Deutsches Requiem

Szymanowski

Stabat Mater

Conducted by
Rick Prakhoff
with
Zelman Symphony

Brahms
Nänie, Op 82
Conducted by
Jessica Zuk

Soloists
Helena Dix
Belinda Paterson
Warwick Fyfe

Melbourne Recital Centre
Friday 11 September 2026 at 8.00pm
Bookings: www.melbournerecital.com.au

Wanderer above the Sea of Fog[a] is a painting by German Romanticist artist Caspar David Friedrich in 1818.

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Welcome to Television

Sunday
AUGUST
23



A musical
celebration of
70 years of television
in Australia

Featuring
David
Johnston
+ Geraldene
Morrow

(Prisoner, Homicide, Bellbird,
The Mike Walsh Show)

2PM | *Malvern Town Hall*

TICKETS TRYBOOKING.COM/DNJMY OR AT THE DOOR



Bible Readings August 2026 (the readings used in our service may differ slightly)

August 9th	Pentecost 11	Genesis 37:1-4,12-28	Psalm 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b	Romans 10:5-15	Matthew 14:22-33
August 16th	Pentecost 12	Genesis 45:1-15 Isiah 56:1,6-8	Psalm 133 Psalm 67	Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32	Matthew 15: (10-20) 21-28
August 23rd	Pentecost 13	Exodus 1:8-2:10	Psalm 124	Romans 12:1-8	Matthew 16:13-20
August 30th	Pentecost 14	Exodus 3:1-15 Jerimiah 15:15-21 45b	Psalm 105:1-6, 23-26 Psalm 26:1-8	Romans 12:9-21	Matthew 16:21-28

CROSSLIGHT is available on the internet - click on the following link or the **CROSSLIGHT** image to view online.
www.crosslight.org.au Print copies of **CROSSLIGHT** are available at the entrance of the Charman Church.

We pray for all in need especially -

Prayers of the People



Robyn
Pat
Adie & Ally
Katherine's cousin David & Family
Tina, friend of Joan Wood
Phillip (Barbara's nephew)
Barry
Adrian
Anne-Maree, Andrew and their
daughter, Rachel
Maria

Jenny and Janine Bartholomeusz
Anita and Kingsley
Joyce Curnow
Stuart - addiction struggles
Helen & Earle Hosking
Grace & Van Rensberg
Joan's friends Robyn & Jemma
Kath Tondorf
Susan Hoskin
Karen
Helen Cole

Gloria, Samson & Family
Mark
Margaret Walker
Joyce Carpenter
Andrew
Bronwyn
Teresa
June and Grace Fairbank

*We give thanks for those whose
prayers have been answered..*

CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER GROUP - recommencing at Charman

Contemplative Prayer has recommenced with the first session to be held **11am Wednesday August 26th at Charman UCA**.
All are welcome to come to this time of silent prayer interspersed with simple Taize song and Scripture sentences.
 Contact Joan, 0421 844 946 if more information needed

WEEKLY OFFERINGS: Thanks to everyone who have continued to make their weekly offering.

Direct Debit: Cheltenham / Mentone members note that direct payments can now be made to our Westpac account at Southland, **BSB number is 033 358, Account Number is 664 881** Payee "UCA Cheltenham Mentone Parish"

SOCIAL COLLECTION DEPARTMENT:

BayCISS - collection of goods by Graeme & Joan Wood has recommenced. Leave goods with them at 66 Bernard St. Cheltenham, or call them on 9555 0462

Emerge - Financial help is the best way to help - Cheques to - GPO Box 420 Melbourne VIC 3001 or donate via the website www.emergesupport.org.au
 Emerge welcomes vouchers for supermarkets or art materials which children could use at home - materials, pencils, colouring books etc. Margaret Bode is happy to collect items if you leave them at her home, 16 Monaco Street Parkdale. **Donations in an envelope marked EMERGE may be left in the collection plate.**



OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL:



Click on the YouTube logo to view a selection of **over 200** sermons and service preludes

*This week's video -
 "Trusting Jesus through the
 storms of life" Pastor Di
 Paterson 2nd August 2026*

*Click on image or [HERE](#) to
 view*



Church on the Internet - Sunday 10am (virtual doors open 9:45 am)



If you don't have Zoom on your computer/laptop/iPad/Smartphone, click on <https://zoom.us/support/download>

Then click on this link below or the "Sunday Church" image to join our Service

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82004410836?pwd=cU9RWlhVMm8wOUw0TStLV1EvNFdYdz09>

Meeting ID: 820 0441 0836 Passcode: 665 784

You can also join us on your phone by dialling **03 7018 2005** and entering the above meeting details.

**Sunday Church
on Zoom**



The frustrations of life ...

