

Petition for Reducing Gun-related Violence, Submitted, by St. Paul's, to our Elected Officials
with an expression of gratitude to St. Paulians, and an account of the petition process
by Tim Lillard

Here's the petition St. Paulians wrote and signed September, 2016, a few months after the Pulse nightclub slaughter -- but please, before you read it, let me first give credit and thanks. Pam Lillard's reaction to the Pulse nightclub massacre gave me the idea of a petition, Bill Highland gave an enthusiastic second. Our sentiments were echoed by many; I particularly recall Lydia Dolch's appeal to the congregation for something to be done. Karen Kaufmann and Pastor John guided us toward being present and invitational but not pushy (I hope we succeeded at that!) We invited everyone to help write it. A couple dozen people wrote, edited, or chimed in. Children were mentioned at the request of the late Elinor John. An excellent critique from Kate O'Neal and David Bell helped us rewrite the next-to-last version to make the one we used. The County Clerk and her staff were very helpful. We relied on reports and studies written by many more people and made available through libraries and websites. It could still be improved. For instance, "mental illness" in the 5th item is much too broad a term.

When I stood up at a meeting a year later to protest Tom Reed's treatment of our petition, and to hand him a copy, Pam was with me, and I felt that all of St. Paul's was with me, and that I would be ashamed to let them down by *not* addressing the meeting. I am the privileged recipient of encouragement from all of St. Paul's, for the third time. The first was our wedding at St. Paul's, when the UMW helped us feed our guests. The second was over the course of years through our son Ethan's illness, with everyone rooting for him and giving love, moral support and meals, and their great, overwhelming tribute to him upon his death.

To my eye, this is a beautiful thing:

"Dear Congressman Reed, Senator Gillibrand, and Senator Schumer,

"We desire to live in a nation of peace, cooperation and mutual trust, not one of terror fed by easy access to rapid-fire, high-caliber firearms. Our police and other forces, authorized by us to secure our lives and liberties, are outgunned. We are grieved by the loss of life by suicide and homicide, including children, mostly by firearms, and by accidental shootings. The way we now learn that a person should not be trusted with a gun, is by the holes left in our bodies and our lives.

"We need to keep the more powerful firearms in the possession of police, reduce the presence of firearms in public, help gun owners be more vigilant about gun safety, and keep firearms out of the hands of irresponsible individuals. We request your action through legislation to save thousands of lives every year, reduce our grief and anxiety, improve the effectiveness of our security forces, and make society correspondingly more civil.

"This is how we wish firearms to be borne in the United States:

1. reserve semiautomatics and open carry for our armed forces and police,
2. require waiting periods for all gun purchases,
3. require proof of locked, secure storage for all guns and ammunition,
4. require licenses for all gun owners, and registration of all guns,
5. require screening for all licenses, based on history of mental illness, crime, drug use, alcohol abuse, domestic abuse and other violent tendencies,
6. require persons with concealed carry licenses to have further education, screening and training that ensures they keep their firearms safe in public,
7. establish effective enforcement for all these measures,
8. and make federal funds available for gun violence research and gun buybacks.

"To the above sentiments, principles and recommended legislation, we, who are members, attendees, or visitors of St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Ithaca in the NY 23rd Congressional District, sign our agreement:"

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121 signatures followed!

We received no response after submitting our petition to Rep. Reed's agent in Ithaca, nor to a follow-up message through his official site. At one of Reed's community meetings, with St. Paul's awesome support in mind, I told the crowd about our petition and Rep. Reed's non-response, about NY's success in reducing gun violence, and Reed's support for H.R.38 - Concealed Carry Reciprocity Act of 2017, *which encourages people from out of state to carry concealed weapons when visiting NY*. I handed Reed a copy of our petition. Lesson learned: give petitions to elected officials only in public.

To *represent* us, our elected officials should solicit the wisdom of the district and publicly acknowledge what we tell them; embrace local petitions they receive as gifts, and post them on their websites; and meet "lobbyists" only in the lobby, where the public can witness. Meanwhile, support from the public and parties should depend on such behavior. We later discovered that we could register the petition at the Tompkins County Clerk. To access it, log in "as guest" to their Online Records (lower left hand side), and enter the word "petition" in their "name" search. It shows an affidavit, names of signers who gave permission to be listed, and the signed petition. Download it by clicking "Save Image". Our petition will remain in the County Clerk's Online Records long after Congressman Reed has left office.

—Tim Lillard

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Fri	Saturday
1 Easter Sunday 7:00 AM Sunrise service/Breakfast-Tenney's home, 220 Brooktondale 9:15 AM Childcare 10:30 AM Worship with Hallelujah Chorus 11:45 AM Coffee/Fellowship - Mem Rm	2 6:45 PM WIM-Mem Rm	3 7:00 PM Social Justice Prayerful Conversation - Durham Rm	4 1:00 PM Labyrinth Available 7:00 PM Staff Parish Relations Committee-Mem Rm	5 6:00 PM Festival Chimes Rehearsal 7:15 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	6 Church Offices Closed	7 2:00 PM Gregorian Chant as Spiritual Practice-Mem Rm/Sanctuary 2:00 PM Virginia Anslie Mem Service-Kendal at Ithaca
8 9:15 AM Childcare 9:30 AM Parents' Small Group - Meditation Loft 9:30 AM Young Adult Small Group - Durham Rm 9:45 AM Children's Music Group-Marketplace 10:30 AM Worship 10:45 AM Faith Explorers & Faith Discovery Group 11:45 AM Coffee/Fellowship - Mem Rm 12:00 PM Youth Groups (Middle and High School)	9 5:30 PM Local & World Missions-Mem Rm	10 11:00 AM OAM Luncheon - Ramada Inn 6:00 PM Finance Team - Mem Rm 7:15 PM Trustees-Mem Rm	11 1:00 PM Labyrinth Available	12 6:00 PM Festival Chimes Rehearsal 7:15 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	13 Church Offices Closed	14
15 Newsletter Deadline 9:15 AM Childcare 9:30 AM Parents' Small Group - Meditation Loft 9:30 AM Young Adult Small Group - Durham Rm 9:45 AM Children's Music Group-Marketplace 10:30 AM Worship 10:45 AM Faith Explorers & Faith Discovery Group 11:45 AM Coffee/Fellowship - Mem Rm 11:45 AM New member orientation 12:00 PM Youth Groups (Middle & HS)	16	17 7:00 PM Church Council-Mem Rm	18 1:00 PM Labyrinth Available	19 6:00 PM Festival Chimes Rehearsal 7:15 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	20 Church Offices Closed	21
22 Earth Day 9:15 AM Childcare 9:30 AM Parents' Small Group - Meditation Loft 9:45 AM Children's Music Group-Marketplace 10:30 AM Worship with Festival Chimes 10:45 AM Faith Explorers & Faith Discovery Group 11:45 AM Coffee/Fellowship - Mem Rm	23 6:45 PM WIM-Mem Rm	24 2:00 PM Prayer Shawl Group - Durham Rm 6:00 PM New member orientation	25 9:00 AM Newsletter mailing-Mem Rm 1:00 PM Labyrinth Available 7:00 PM Soulful Living Pilgrimage Group-Mem Rm	26 6:00 PM Festival Chimes Rehearsal 7:15 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	27 Church Offices Closed	28 11:00 AM Confirmation Rehearsal
29 Confirmation Sunday 9:15 AM Childcare 9:30 AM Parents' Small Group - Meditation Loft 9:45 AM Children's Music Group-Marketplace 10:30 AM Worship with Confirmation 10:45 AM Faith Explorers & Faith Discovery Group 11:45 AM Coffee/Fellowship - Mem Rm	30	1 1:00 PM OAM Leadership meeting-Durham Rm 7:00 PM Social Justice Prayerful Conversation - Durham Rm	2 1:00 PM Labyrinth Available 7:00 PM Staff Parish Relations Committee-Mem Rm	3 6:00 PM Festival Chimes Rehearsal 7:15 PM Chancel Choir Rehearsal	4 Church Offices Closed	5