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### **MVUUC responds to author's transphobic tweets**

We at MVUUC have been saddened and angered by the author J.K. Rowling's recent transphobic tweets. It has hit us especially hard because MVUUC has run a successful Hogwarts-inspired summer camp for kids since 2015. This summer camp regularly fills to capacity, with an eager wait-list, and it has positively shaped the way we connect with youth in our area, with each other in our congregation, and with the outside world. It is one of our major community undertakings that truly takes our whole village to put on a week of magic and wonder for kids.

Our camp is Hogwarts-inspired, meaning that we have different houses and different traditions. Originally conceived by UU educator Jessica Gray, our magical universe is explicitly anti-racist and trans inclusive, and seeks to live out the UU principles in our week of magic and fun. We have welcomed, and will continue to welcome, campers and staff with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, race and ethnicities, countries of origin, health statuses, abilities, and so on. Because we work hard to dismantle systems of privilege and oppression, it is also imperative that we take a stand and speak out about J.K. Rowling and how we intend to proceed with our own version of Hogwarts.

[We agree with others who have argued that it is not possible to separate the work from the author.](#) Critically reading the *Harry Potter* series reveals many moments when Rowling's anti-Semitism, racism, and transphobia shape the story. Thus, it would be wrong to say we can criticize Rowling but still celebrate the books. The books too must be called out; the characters and storylines that support racist and transphobic ideology must be made obvious. It is not responsible to pretend as if the stories themselves are apolitical.

In fact, some of the inclusive political and social undertones of the series are exactly what drew so many people to the series—especially so many who felt outcast because of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or race/ethnicity. Rowling's recent comments have been so hurtful precisely because the HP world was a ["refuge"](#) for so many of us. It was a place where a group of teens could come together to fight an unjust and fascist system, where love and friendship

was more powerful than blood, where an outcast could find meaning and connection. Thus, it's imperative that we also acknowledge how hurt fans are by Rowling's tweets.

But what Rowling can't control is how we respond to the mix of good and bad in the text. The reality of any text is that once it is out in the world, it no longer fully belongs to the author. We can talk about it, argue with it, critique it, rewrite parts of it—we *have the power of response*. So, we at MVUUC have decided to respond with these concrete steps:

- 1) We will continue to hold our "Hogwarts at MVUUC" summer camp. The version of the magical universe we've created is now indelibly unique to MVUUC, and J.K. Rowling's bigotry, and the problems in the books, cannot take that from us.
- 2) However, we can always improve upon the universe we've created. In this year's camp, and all subsequent camps, we will:
  - a. Ensure that at least one class helps kids develop critical reading and critical thinking skills to see how racism, misogyny, and transphobia shape storytelling and fantasy fiction.
  - b. Expand staff training to include more education about LGBTQ+ identities, white privilege, and anti-racist/anti-imperialist pedagogy.
  - c. Encourage house service projects to focus on LGBTQ+ organizations (especially LGBTQ youth) and anti-racist organizations. Each year our 4 houses (Waverider, Stonedragon, Windhorse, and Phoenixfire) complete a service-project as a group. Camp leadership will help houses connect with LGBTQ+ and anti-racist organizations to complete their service projects.
- 3) MVUUC will donate a percentage of any profits from camp to [The Trevor Project](#). Founded in 1998 by the creators of the Academy Award®-winning short film TREVOR, The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning (LGBTQ) young people under 25.
- 4) MVUUC will provide educational opportunities to our members, parents, and community to help raise awareness of LGBTQ+ issues and anti-racist strategies. Resources can be found on our website, and we will offer discussions and classes in the future. For now, we want to direct parents and community members to these great resources:
  - [Katy Montgomerie's article in Medium](#) is an excellent resource to unpack each of J.K. Rowling's transphobic tweets.
  - The Trevor Project has a great resource called [A Guide to Being an Ally to Trans and Nonbinary Youth](#)
  - [Danielle Radcliff's statement](#) regarding J.K. Rowling's tweets is also worth reading

Inquiries about this statement and [our summer camp](#) (August 13-14 this year), can be directed to Patricia Schuelke, our Director of Religious Education, at [dre@mvuuc.org](mailto:dre@mvuuc.org).