

## The Peyote Way Spirit Walk

### Me, and my beliefs

Hi, my name is Annie. I am the only living apostle of the Peyote Way Church of God. I am also usually the person who answers the phone, responds to emails, and makes the sacramental tea. Since 1978, Church cofounder Rev Immanuel Trujillo who died in 2010, President Matthew Kent and I have been running the Peyote Way Church with many helpers along the way.

The Peyote Way church is multi-ethnic and non-denominational, which means we don't tell people what to believe. Our doctrine is concerned with behavior rather than belief, but if you have to believe in something believe in yourself.

As Peyote Way is an experiential religion, we let the individual form their own conclusions after a Spirit Walk with the Holy sacrament Peyote. My own beliefs have gone through several incarnations as a result of my experiences. During the Spirit Walk I feel a presence or force that does not judge or condemn but connects us to each other and if we pay attention presents gentle guidance. As Jesus said,

We have learned from our Spirit Walk experiences that working through our doubts and fears alone in the wilderness gave us a feeling of self-confidence, and the inner strength to handle common day to day stresses. The solitary Spirit Walk is empowering and vital to healing—that knowing of “I can do this.” We all have the ability and knowledge for self-healing, but we need to believe in our body's capacity to heal. We consider ourselves to be stewards and facilitators. No one attempts to fill the role of shaman as the input of another person can complicate the process of healing.

## Set and Setting

Set and Setting are a very important part of the sacramental experience, which is why we do what we can to ensure that people feel safe in their surroundings. The Peyote Way Church is in a Valley surrounded by three Mountain ranges. We are blessed by the magnificence of these mountains which also block most cell phone signals. Our limited internet access means we don't provide WIFI to visitors. Though at first people may find these lacks inconvenient, most report finding the break from internet and cell phone service to be restful. I call it a desert Avalon.

We believe that the solitary spirit walk in this beautiful natural environment is a very good setting for private prayer and healing. It is only when we are away from other people that we can face our demons and our fears. We can cry or sing unimpeded by self-consciousness. When we are not around other people, we don't need to wear the mask of persona. We are not really alone. Out in nature under the stars, we are surrounded by plants and wildlife all enjoying the desert. The owls call to each other, the coyotes howl—in chorus and solo—and all these sounds remind our bodies and subconscious that we are beings of the Earth our mother.

### The Spirit Walk:

The sacramental tea is made by mixing 21 grams of powdered peyote with 14 oz of boiled well water. A larger person might be given a few more grams of powdered Peyote, but otherwise everyone receives the same heroic amount.

Because it is a drink in a 14 ounce bottle the individual can control how much or how little they want to drink. With Peyote there is no overdose and the individual does not lose the awareness of who they are or where they are. To the

contrary-awareness increases. Often the person who drinks only 2-4oz of the tea has as moving and healing an experience as the person who drinks the whole jar.

Peyote is difficult to consume and often an individual will want to hold their nose and drink the whole bottle in two to three gulps. We discourage that ingestion method as the result is an almost immediate expulsion of all of the tea onto the ground. Instead we encourage ingestion over the course of 4-6 hours, a small sip every twenty minutes, as the most beneficial way to drink a lot of tea and retain it for as long as possible. Later, after 6 or 8 hours of silent meditation a thought or memory may cause the individual to vomit. Often there is a spiritual healing connection as the culmination of memories, images, personal grief or remorse precede the purge. Individuals sometimes report that they felt that all of their perceived darkness and ugliness was expelled from their body with the vomit. Afterward, as if all those hurts, ills or sins have been forgiven some feel washed clean from the inside out.

However, the purge is not always necessary. If one can keep the sacrament down there may also be a profound and healing physical effect, as the sacrament works its way through the body's intestines and out, but with or without the purge, many have reported that the sacrament has caused healing of spirit, mind and body.

At the pre-spirit walk meeting everyone is invited to sit at the kitchen table where the counselor will provide instructions for ingestion of the tea and takes car keys just for the night. We don't feel that is wise or safe for an individual to try to drive away during the night when their awareness is dwelling in the space between the spiritual and the material world. The rule is no key, no tea, no exceptions.

At the individual's chosen spirit walk area a church steward has laid a fire, set out firewood, a chair, pads and sleeping bags. In the morning the Steward will check the fire and collect items left at the Spirit walk area to be returned to the individual and order is restored to the Spirit Walk area. If an individual is still sitting at their chosen site in the morning, our stewards leave them in peace.

The room they are given when they arrive is available to the communicant so they can return to it at any time—as long as they stay out the first 6-8 hours of their Spirit Walk. We keep a crock pot of organic pinto beans ready for breakfast and a pantry with canned organic soups and dry ramen and herbal teas for eating and drinking. If someone wants to bring some vegetarian food for their breakfast, the refrigerator is available to hold perishables.

### The Spirit Walk effect

The various ways Peyote and other plant sacraments affect people seems to be unique to each individual. During their Spirit Walk some people see UFO's. Some people like me close their eyes and see inner visions, hear voices or singing. Some rare individuals astral travel or see external visions. Some may have no visions but spend the night in reflection and feel a deep connection to plants and animals and to all people. Peyote is antiaddictive and has a healing effect on individuals who have suffered trauma. Peyote connects us to spirit. Despite some of the images described to me, I still reject the notion that the individuals were hallucinating, a word I consider pejorative in regard to plant sacraments. I prefer to think that the images are symbolic messages from Spirit or the subconscious.

Peyote deals with us on our own level. It doesn't give more or less than we are prepared for. While in the Spirit

realm during the Spirit Walk, we experience a sort of soul retrieval. The wounds of our spirit and mind heal and often body complaints are also remedied. As we grow spiritually the messages from Spirit given through the Holy Sacrament Peyote respond to personal growth and new needs, so each spirit walk is unique. Not all illnesses can be healed, and in those cases, Peyote provides a spiritually healing event that can help prepare the individual for their passage into death.

Peyote will not solve your problems. With Peyote the sacramental experience focuses on needs not wants. After a Spirit Walk an individual may have more Questions than Answers. What Peyote may do is create a spiritual opening for an individual to find their own solutions.

In the past 40 years of sharing this sacrament Peyote, we have marveled at its great gift. People often arrive at the Church looking exhausted with dark circles under the eyes and worry lines around the mouth. The world is laying heavy on their shoulders. The morning after the Spirit Walk, even after a 24 hour fast and a night without sleep, many individuals look rested-- the skin is smooth, and their features are relaxed.

We don't ask a communicant how their experience was, but if someone needs to talk, we will listen. We feel the experience is not over the following morning, so we encourage curious fasting visitors to save their questions for a Church Steward rather than disrupting a communicant's experience with questions.

When describing the Spirit Walk, I sometimes compare it to Charles Dickens "A Christmas Carol." You meet the ghosts of your X-Mas Past, the ghosts of your X-Mas future and the ghosts of your present. Memories, hurts, and regrets for what we perceive of as sins against others, are all seen

from an objective view provided by the Holy Sacrament. I consider that the divine connection –the indifferent or non-judgmental presence reminds us that, in the big picture, what we perceive as sins may be quite insignificant and the thoughts and behaviors we accept as normal may not be acceptable.

Sometimes there are people who feel that they have received no benefit from their experience—and it's true that Peyote is not for everyone. Often though the same people who reported that nothing happened get back to us with messages like “All my cravings are gone, I sleep like a baby and my wife says I am a nicer person” or “Since I got home, I have cleaned all the packaged white sugar and flour products out of my cupboards and fridge.” Or “that was the most profound experience of my life.”

Sometimes after a spirit walk, an individual may say, “I feel like I am finally awake”-For some it's like taking the blinders off a horse. We put blinders over a horse's eyes because they shy and are afraid of the unfamiliar things they may see, but with the blinders on they have no fear. We humans similarly wear blinders blocking out Spirit so we can function in our daily lives. During the Spirit Walk, spirit images that might normally frighten us are no longer frightening, and we see the world with clarity. We realize there is much more to this world than what we see and hear, and we feel the connection to everything around us.

### Enhancing the benefits?

I think that because people live in a societal construct, they often lose touch with the big R-Reality, and its power and magic. Earlier I called it the Great Mystery. I believe in magic, just not the Harry Potter kind. The spiritual magic

that quantum physics and microbiology are just starting to understand is Real Earth magic. Multiverses cross over each other and affect us in mysterious ways, and a small green cactus can reveal profound truths.

I usually begin my spirit walk with prayers of gratitude for the life I have been given. This is also a good time to send out loving thoughts to family and friends, and for thanking the holy Sacrament for the blessings it bestows on us.

### After the Spirit Walk what?

The body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Word of Wisdom revelation, Section 89 of the LDS Church's Doctrine and Covenants, that we embraced in 1978 as our dietary code is a principle with a promise of health. The Word of Wisdom suggests meat not be used, but only to be consumed in times of Winter, Cold or famine, and herbs are to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. We consider pregnancy to fit in the category of "famine." Michael Pollan's Food Rules is a good general dietary guide but Michael Gregor's How Not to Die is even better. We recommend eating organic whole foods as much as possible.

Treating our body with the respect it deserves, paying attention to diet, and regular physical exercise can improve mental and physical health and eliminate or lessen the need for certain prescription drugs.

Getting our hands in the dirt, planting and harvesting garden grown food, is spiritually invigorating and healing. Plants pick up our energy and respond to our healing needs so that the food we grow sustains us in a way that store bought produce never could. It doesn't hurt to talk to the plants and express gratitude for this gift of life.

Matthew has called me the Bag lady for 25 or more years, as bringing my own shopping bags to the grocery store means less consumption of plastic throw away grocery bags. I am not telling you this to glorify myself—I still generate more trash than I would like. The first few years here at the Church, dumping our trash in a hole every month, forced me to see how much trash three or four people could generate. If we made so much trash how much more trash does a city of people generate? My conscience told me I had to work harder to make less waste. Small efforts at conservation are important and can help, but we must all consider how we spend our money and what we purchase. Recycling is not enough. I want to encourage everyone to re-use and repurpose products and be selective about how you spend your money--buy products that involve less packaging. Part of walking consciously is attempting to leave a lighter footprint in all we do

Other things we can do after the Spirit Walk is practicing short periods of meditation and keeping a dream journal. With these tools we can awaken our daily awareness to miracles around us all the time. Learning to pay attention to our surroundings—noticing and observing the message of Spirit in our path, will reinforce the impressions gained from the Spirit Walk, that we are not alone and all of us have Spirit helpers if we only pay attention.

We can make our actions sacred regardless of our occupations -by practicing mindfulness—that is being aware and empathic to the people we interact with and the impact of our actions on ourselves, others and the planet.

We invite church members to create a sacred area where they can take the solitary spirit walk using their own peyote plants or other sacred plants. In the five or six states

that protect the bona fide religious use of Peyote, AZ, NM, NV, CO, OR and now UT, any Church member with a notarized Declaration of Religious Belief posted near their growing plants can keep a Sacred Peyote garden for religious use. Today there are many individuals keeping sacred gardens all over the world. We have members who renew annually just so they can keep a garden.

But also, we can remember our Spirit Walk experience with a refresher while camping alone in the wilderness without the sacrament. In Rev. Immanuel Trujillo's booklet, *The Trinity and the Always*, he says not every Spirit Walk needs to include an entheogen. Sometimes just spending a night or two outside in the wilderness alone by a fire under the stars can recall the sacramental experience and help us to recalibrate our priorities.

### Variations on the Sacred Peyote garden

We invite Individuals and groups to copy Peyote Way Spirit Walk and Plant conservation efforts. Growing Peyote, like conserving other life on Planet Earth, is a stewardship we all need to embrace now.

### Peyote Schedule One

The Spirit Walk experience is sacred, and I feel it should always stay under the province of the sacred and in a religious framework. Peyote does not belong on the Controlled Substances list as a dangerous drug, but there should be some caveat similar to the Arizona Revised Statutes, that states that Peyote is protected in the context of bona fide religious use. I would not want it to be listed under a medical category even though it has many beneficial healing effects, because I would not want big Pharma to have an opportunity to take over control of a sacrament that

should be managed by the same people who consume it in sacred ceremonies. The Government has no business inside a person's mind and big Pharma has no business near Psychedelic entheogens.

In closing I would like to briefly read one of the many testimonials we receive from our communicants,  
“Thank You for your help, I've been sober since my spirit walk in June, and have never felt better. The peyote had a lot to do with it, it feels like it's constantly behind the scenes pulling strings for me....”

Thanks for listening to me. Here's our Church President since 1993, my soul mate of 42 years and my spiritual counselor and midwife for the birth of our three children, Rabbi Matthew Kent.