

Eimear Burke:

It's just so wonderful to be here with you all. It's very emotional and very teary. Very touched by the power of your support and the power of your fellowship and the power of your love. So many people have come up to me wishing me support generally, and I really thank you for that.

Eimear Burke:

I want to thank Philip and Stephanie for, I suppose, his loving words today, and he spoke for me when he was talking about all the people who support this order, especially for his guidance in the last, well, still two years, he, the 99%. That's not right. He's been a great support to me and available at the phone or an email or WhatsApp whenever I needed it. And I agree, I think Stephanie, you are a wonderful partnership, and Stephanie's been a very subtle support to me. She's not always subtle.

Stephanie Carr-Gomm:

Very rarely.

Eimear Burke:

But her hospitality, her kindness to me, and her gentle nudging in my camper van, how many years ago, encouraging me to write to Mary Spain and just do the Druid Review. And I didn't realize that she had an ulterior motive for that. I wanted to thank you. I don't think I'd be here if I hadn't done it.

Eimear Burke:

Two years ago, I described the order as a natural forest with a diversity of plants and trees, and such diversity is so healthy, and I think we have a very, very healthy order. And I think we're longing to pay tribute to the health, comparing the past with the present, and let's hope this health continues.

Eimear Burke:

For me, it's an order that has so many different faces, different expressions, and people have different experiences of the order. There are people who go to camps and nothing else, and then there are people who come to the gatherings in Glastonbury. Others go on the OBOD retreats or the Gorseddau.

Eimear Burke:

People asked me before I took over what changes I was going to make to the Order, and I said, none. For me, the order didn't need changing, but perhaps I would add something. And something has happened in the last two years. So we have created an online presence, and this is another experience of the members. I didn't appreciate how difficult it was for solitary druids until this pandemic.

Eimear Burke:

I had been a solitary practitioner for the first seven years and that I became active in the order. But my sense of how isolated people are... There are people all over the world who can't declare they're druids because they might lose their job or their community isn't open to it. And that in these last two years, the only thing I'll say thanks to the pandemic, that it brought our order closer, and people now have a greater sense of community. I think that is so, so important.

Eimear Burke:

However, there is no substitute for gathering together to be able to physically hug and smile and share food and share mead or whatever, or to be physically present and together in a ceremony.

Eimear Burke:

We are going to continue having an online presence. Philip has come back with his Teas, which is wonderful. The fireside chats continue. Our online ceremonies. And we've had two Zoom meetups, which have been a great success, and we're going to continue with those. And then we're going to have Zoom sessions where we have speakers and maybe breakout rooms for discussions, so that we will have both a physical presence or a physical experience of the order and continue for our members worldwide.

Eimear Burke:

The membership has doubled in the last two years. I'm not taking credit for that, but I would imagine it's part of the zeitgeist that people are concerned for the planet, the earth, and her beings, and who better than an order of druids OBOD to support people in that.

Eimear Burke:

I never thought we'd have online ceremonies, that they would work. I would've said no, no, no, you can't do that. And yet two years ago, with the installation ceremony, thanks to Damh's magic and weaving of those recordings. I sat in my sitting room with my stepdaughter and my two children with some friends, sensing the connection. I could feel it as Philip handed the mantle over to me, and I was in tears. I never thought that was possible.

Eimear Burke:

Of course we work in the Otherworld all the time, yet it's just so lovely to experience the confirmation of the installation today in front of you, and to have it witnessed and feeling that love.

Eimear Burke:

I want to thank my family. I am so pleased they're here. Five of them, can you believe? My brother from the US and my sister from Dublin, my son, my daughter, and my stepdaughter. Just wonderful.

Eimear Burke:

Ruan and Quelan came with me my first time to Glastonbury with Howard, my late husband. We came to do the ritual meditation courses with Barry and Kate Riely at Chalice Well. I remember walking down the high street thinking, this is Diagon Alley and it hasn't changed, because I saw one wizard outside the abbey yesterday. It was just wonderful.

Eimear Burke:

One person I haven't mentioned is Maria. I want you to stand up because I want to see you. Maria has been such a support and a rock in the last few years. I met her the first time yesterday. In addition to holding and minding and finding Phillip's marbles, I hope she'll do the same for me. She has that gentle touch, that wisdom. She has a wonderful way of words. Constantly generous. I see how she answers the messages on Facebook. Her kindness, her consideration, her wisdom, her brilliance. Thank you, Maria I'm waffling, because I've gone off piece. You're going to have to bear with me, I'm quite excited.

Eimear Burke:

Anyway, it's just a great privilege and an honor to be of service as chosen chief to what is the most amazing of druid orders. And I think you would agree with that. I'm not the only one of service. Philip talked about all of the people he mentioned who over the years have and continue to be of service, to continue to contribute with competence, love, passion, commitment, and joy to the running of the order.

Eimear Burke:

One of the cornerstones of druidry is service. And what I love about this order is that service has many faces. We each of us are of service in our own way. We are unique. So we can be healers, teachers, ritual owners, celebrants, musicians, poets, singers, storytellers, and there's an expression of service for everybody.

Eimear Burke:

I'm also grateful to those Seedgroups and Groves in the last two years who've stepped up and done the online ceremonies. Those who already do their physical ones, but still contribute to the order by considering those who don't have a physical Groves or Seedgroup. Thank you so much for doing that. And we are going to continue with those.

Eimear Burke:

Each one of us contributes to this order to make it what it is. And I hope to continue that ethos as the years go ahead, to strengthen that we are of service altogether, the love of justice, peace, the love of all existences. And we have an expression in Irish. It's under the shadow of each other that people survive.

Eimear Burke:

The Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids, like three strands of a rope, and each strand is made up of the individual strand, the individual members, to make a very, very strong rope. There is strength in unity.