

**CELTIC SUBDOMAINS**  
**Richard Moore**

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# BOOK OF THE FAITHFUL CELTIC SUBDOMAINS



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# INTRODUCTION

The cleric occupies a well-defined space in fantasy RPGs, molded over decades into a form that some players have difficulty reshaping to their own desires. Typically, clerics are expected to follow one of two well-defined archetypes: the armored defender of the faith or the robed priest who works miracles of healing. These archetypes are rooted in the Judeo-Christian European influences of the early iterations of the game; indeed, the 2nd Edition AD&D Player's Handbook cites exactly these sorts of examples in its description of the cleric class.

Certainly there is a place for such characters, but it's always sort of bothered me that if I want to play a divine caster whose faith is more rooted in the reverence of nature, then by default I am expected to play a druid. There is no shortage of examples of such worshipers in history, after all; one need only look to the traditions of the ancient Celts and what tiny bits of real-world pre-Christian religion (European or otherwise) have been preserved over the ages. It is safe to say, for example, that the druids of our world were not merely stark nature worshipers devoid of regard for morality, nor was their purview strictly limited to the natural world. The druids ministered to their people in times of need and hardship, adjudicated disputes between commoners according to their own laws and precepts, and even kept their own gods. Certainly the reverence of nature played a large role in their religion, but they did not exclusively worship nature as the druids of the more popular fantasy RPGs typically do.

With this in mind, and drawing inspiration from Dale McCoy's own Beltane subdomain featured in *Book of Magic: Insurgency of Summer*, I set out to craft cleric subdomains that are thematically linked to the other three cross-quarter festivals honored by pagan worshipers of both the ancient and modern worlds, as well as the four holidays marked by the equinoxes and solstices. These subdomains are presented in the order they occur throughout the Julian calendar year rather than alphabetically. Two other subdomains were inspired by traditional foci: runes and standing stones.

One final note: scholars of history and religion who are much more learned than me on such subjects might take issue with the name choices for these subdomains for a number of reasons—most predictably, because the names may be tinged with a more modern flavor than the traditional names for these holidays or foci. For instance, Mabon is an affectation for the autumnal equinox which was coined in the 1970s by neo-pagans. But "autumnal equinox" is a mouthful of a name for a subdomain, and so, for style and brevity's sake, I took the liberty of using this term instead. I mean no offense or presumption by these choices, and it is my belief that a rational reader can discern between game constructs that allow us to have fun playing the characters we want to play and the real world ideas that have inspired them.

I hope that these subdomains will be of use to GMs and players interested in exploring how such clerics might function in their own game worlds, and perhaps seeking to defy the genre conventions of the cleric as warpriest or monk (the robed kind, not the flurry of blows kind).

## Beltane

**Associated Domain:** Sun

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the nimbus of light power of the Sun domain.

**Bonfire Dance (Su):** At 6th level, you can channel the energy of the sacred bonfires into a powerful dance, granting you and your allies within a 30-foot radius protection for a number of rounds per day equal to your cleric level. You and your allies within this radius gain a +1 deflection bonus to AC and resistance 5 against cold. The deflection bonus increases by +1 for every four cleric levels you possess beyond 8th. At 14th level, the resistance against cold increases to 10. These rounds do not need to be consecutive.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 2nd—*snapdragon fireworks*<sup>UM</sup>, 6th—*fire seeds*.

Clerics of Beltane light sacred bonfires that are used as foci in rituals to protect livestock, crops, and laymen. They also use the power of the returning summer sun to protect their followers from the ravages of cold and ice.

## Dolmen

**Associated Domain:** Earth

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the acid dart power of the Earth domain.

**Disrupt Ground (Sp):** As a standard action, you can disrupt a 5-foot square of ground terrain within 60 feet, making it rough terrain. The ground in that square makes a Trip attack against any creature in it that takes an action, using a CMB equal to 10 + 1/2 your cleric level + your Wisdom modifier. The square persists for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level, but these rounds do not need to be consecutive. You may end this effect at will.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 4th—*dimension door*, 5th—*passwall*, 7th—*greater teleport*, 9th—*gate*.

Clerics of the Dolmen perform their rites of worship within stone gates and circles. Through great discipline and deep meditation, they learn to open portals in reality to shorten the distance between *here* and *there*.

## Imbolc

**Associated Domain:** Protection

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the aura of protection power of the Protection domain.

**Fortify Armor (Su):** At 8th level, you can give a garment, suit of armor, or shield touched the *light fortification* special armor quality for a number of rounds per day equal to your cleric level. This ability bestows *moderate fortification* when you reach 12th level, and *heavy fortification* at 16th level. These rounds do not need to be consecutive, but you may only affect one such item at any given time.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 2nd—*communal protection from evil*<sup>UC</sup>, 5th—*hallow*, 6th—*symbol of sealing*<sup>UM</sup>, 8th—*fool's forbiddance*<sup>APG</sup>.

For a cleric who specializes in the rituals of Imbolc, the hearth and home are of paramount importance in their workings. They exercise their powers to bless the homes of their friends and neighbors, as well as armor the defenders of their towns and stymie encroaching invaders.



## Litha

**Associated Domain:** Fire

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the fire bolt power of the Fire domain.

**Light Bolt (Sp):** As a standard action, you can unleash a blinding bolt of sacred light from your outstretched hand. You can target any single foe within 30 feet as a ranged touch attack with this bolt of light. If you hit the foe, the light bolt deals 1d4 points of damage + 1 point for every three cleric levels you possess. (This damage is untyped, but constructs and inanimate objects are unaffected by this power.) Additionally, if the affected creature has eyes, it is dazzled for a number of rounds equal to half your cleric level (minimum of 1 round). You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 1st—*remove sickness*<sup>UM</sup>, 3rd—*searing light*, 4th—*cleanse*<sup>APG</sup>, 5th—*flame strike*, 6th—*sirocco*<sup>APG</sup>, 8th—*sunburst*, 9th—*mass heal*.

Clerics of the summer solstice bear the power of light and fire, burning away the unholy and purifying the bodies of their allies. Though they derive their power from the year's longest day, they know that the return of darkness is always high—and that they must stand ever-vigilant against the threat of evil.

## Lughnasadh

**Associated Domain:** Community

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the unity power of the Community domain.

**Aura of Confidence (Su):** At 6th level, you can emit a 60-foot aura of confidence as a standard action. Allies in this aura receive a morale bonus to their Acrobatics, Climb, Fly, Ride, and Swim checks equal to your Wisdom modifier for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level. You can use this ability once per day at 6th level, and an additional time per day for every four levels beyond 6th.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 2nd—*bull's strength*, 3rd—*suggestion*, 4th—*serenity*<sup>UM</sup>, 7th—*transformation*.

Clerics who exude the virtues of Lughnasadh are gifted athletes and arbiters. They frequently organize conclaves wherein their clergyfolk complete with one another in trials of might and agility and settle disputes among the faithful.

## Mabon

**Associated Domain:** Plant

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the bramble armor power of the Plant domain.

**Bounty of Nature (Su):** Once per day at 6th level, you can bless a meal of fruits, grains, or vegetables so that, when consumed prior to resting, it increases the amount of natural healing from which a creature benefits after an eight-hour rest. This blessing can affect a number of creatures equal to half your cleric level plus your Wisdom modifier. Each affected creature regains 2 hp per Hit Die and one additional point of ability damage to a single ability score of its choice after resting. At 12th level, each affected

creature regains 3 hp per Hit Die and one additional point of ability damage to every ability score that has been damaged after resting.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 2nd—*campfire wall*<sup>APG</sup>, 5th—*rest eternal*<sup>APG</sup>, 6th—*liveoak*, 9th—*greater siege of trees*<sup>UC</sup>.

A cleric of the autumn equinox gives thanks to his gods for a good harvest and uses his powers to bring rest and asylum to the weary. In return for their devotion to the spirits that make the grains grow tall and the vines and orchards swell with fruit, they may call armies of plant servants to their side to defend their companions and charges.

## Ogham

**Associated Domain:** Rune

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the spell rune power of the Rune domain.

**Obfuscatory Rune (Su):** At 8th level, your blast runes become clearly visible to allied creatures, allowing them to easily elude the destructive effects. However, the runes are more difficult for enemy creatures to detect and disable, increasing the DCs of Perception and Disable Device checks made to do so by 1/2 your cleric level.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 4th—*symbol of healing*<sup>UM</sup>, 5th—*symbol of scrying*<sup>UM</sup>, 6th—*symbol of sealing*<sup>UM</sup>, 7th—*symbol of stunning*, 8th—*discern location*, 9th—*symbol of vulnerability*<sup>UM</sup>.

Closely linked to the secret language of druids, Ogham runes are designed to stymie the efforts of enemy creatures who would attempt to decipher the communications of clerics who use it. They can also be used to divine powerfully precise knowledge. Clerics of the Ogham often inscribe scrolls on yew sticks or sheets of thinly cut wood.

## Ostara

**Associated Domain:** Healing

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the healer's blessing power of the Healing domain.

**Secrets of Life (Su):** At 8th level, you can cast spells of the conjuration school as if your caster level were 1 higher than normal, and as if your Wisdom score were 2 higher than normal. At 16th level, you can cast such spells as if your caster level were 2 higher than normal, and as if your Wisdom score were 4 higher than normal. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to 1/2 your cleric level.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 1st—*anticipate peril*<sup>UM</sup>, 2nd—*spear of purity*<sup>UM</sup>, 3rd—*daybreak arrow*<sup>UC</sup>, 4th—*reincarnate*, 5th—*mass cure light wounds*, 6th—*mass cure moderate wounds*, 7th—*mass cure serious wounds*, 8th—*mass cure critical wounds*.

The vernal equinox brings with it the promise of rebirth and rejuvenation, and clerics who perform the rites of Ostara specialize not only in healing but also in new beginnings and the impetus of action. Ostara is a time of light, and these clerics bring the summer's dawning to bear against their foes.



## Samhain

**Associated Domain:** Death

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the death's embrace power of the Death domain.

**Secrets of Death (Su):** At 8th level, you can cast spells of the necromancy school as if your caster level were 1 higher than normal, and as if your Wisdom score were 2 higher than normal. At 16th level, you can cast such spells as if your caster level were 2 higher than normal, and as if your Wisdom score were 4 higher than normal. This ability is usable a number of times per day equal to 1/2 your cleric level.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 1st—*hide from undead*, 3rd—*speak with dead*, 5th—*mass ghostbane dirge*<sup>APG</sup>, 6th—*undeath to death*, 8th—*undead anatomy IV*<sup>UM</sup>.

The disciplines of Samhain permit clerics to amplify their magical workings through an innate understanding of the cycle of death and rebirth. By communicating with entities from outside the mortal coil, they gain wisdom and power beyond the understanding of most other casters.

## Yule

**Associated Domain:** Darkness

**Replacement Power:** The following granted power replaces the eyes of darkness power of the Darkness domain.

**Adjust Illumination (Su):** At 6th level, you can change the level of lighting within a 60-foot radius area centered on you as a standard action. You may change the lighting conditions in the area by one step in either direction along the continuum of lighting (bright light, normal light, dim light, darkness); this effect works even in magically-generated areas of light and darkness, and persists for a number of rounds equal to your cleric level; these rounds do not need to be consecutive, but only one such 60-foot radius area can be so affected at any given time. At 12th level, you can adjust lighting by up to 2 steps, and by up to 3 steps at 18th level.

**Replacement Domain Spells:** 1st—*goodberry*, 2nd—*tree shape* (evergreens only), 5th—*heroes' feast*, 7th—*joyful rapture*<sup>UM</sup>, 9th—*polar midnight*<sup>UM</sup>.

A cleric of Yule embodies mirth and altruism. Devotees of the winter solstice revere this sacred time as a means of harnessing the powers of shadow, but also as a reminder that light and joy may yet return even to the deepest darkness and sorrows.



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