

Respond
Inform **Unite**
Support **Prayer**
Empower



Why a DOVE?

The dove is considered a symbol for peace, purity, hope, renewal, transformation and new beginnings which makes it a gentle yet powerful image for those affected by Domestic Abuse. In the Old Testament, it was a dove that signalled the end of the flood when it returned to the ark with an olive branch. (Gen 8:8-12). As a result of this story, a dove with an olive branch came to mean peace, forgiveness and deliverance.

It has been suggested that doves also represent compassion and kindness to others during difficult transitions. The dove is therefore symbolic of our love and support for victims of domestic abuse.

Doves are widely appreciated for their peacefulness and gentleness as they can soothe and restore wellbeing. In the psalms David honours the dove in the midst of his suffering and troubles of old age as he cries out:

*Oh that I had wings like a dove!
For then would I fly away, and be at rest. (Psalm 55:6).*

The dove is also a symbol of love, constancy and faithfulness. This can be seen in the Song of Solomon:

*O my dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the covert of the cliff, let me see your face,
let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet,
and your face is lovely. (Song of Solomon 2:14).*

The cooing of doves is used to signify mourning in the Old Testament as when illustrating the suffering of the people of Judah and their desire for liberation:

*We all growl like bears; like
doves we moan mournfully.
We wait for justice, but there is none; for
salvation, but it is far from us. (Isaiah 59:11).*

*If any survivors escape,
they shall be found on the mountains like doves of the
valleys, all of them moaning over their iniquity. (Ezekiel
7:16).*

However, doves represent more than a lament over a broken relationship with God; they were an instrument of atonement and were used as a sacrifice.

*If your offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, you shall choose your offering from
turtledoves or pigeons. (Leviticus 1:14).*

In the New Testament the Dove symbolises the Holy Spirit as seen at Jesus' baptism. When Jesus was baptised, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:22; Jn 1:32). This represents the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers and how he guides and protects.

In this way the dove is therefore a symbol of:

- peace, renewal and transformation for all impacted by domestic abuse;
- deliverance and forgiveness for those in need of mercy;
- compassion and kindness that we wish to show to all victims of abuse;
- restoration, tranquillity and balm to all in need of healing;
- love and faithfulness to those seeking reassurance; and
- hope, a new beginning, and the assurance of God's love for and presence with us at all times.

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, as a dove, come, breathe hope and peace into the lives of all impacted by domestic abuse, hover over them with your love and protection. Find a resting place in our hearts, compel us to bring compassion and kindness to all who suffer. Empower us to protect the abused and stand with the fearful.

Come, Holy Spirit, as a dove, come,
Breathe into our hearts this day and every day.
Amen.

(Adapted from the article 'O for the Wings of a Dove' by Fleur Dorrell from the God who Speaks website – www.godwhospeaks.uk)