

Sneinton St Stephen St Francis

Aim: To learn more about the life of St Francis

Objective: The children hear the story of St Francis and respond to this

Curriculum links:

KS1 – leaders and teachers

KS2 – inspirational people

Activity: The children will make bird feeders to remind them of St Francis' love of animals and birds and design a book cover depicting the life of St Francis.

Resources: A copy of the story of St Francis – this could be the version below, or there are several picture books available which give a good version of the story.

Fir cones, lard, bird seed, string

Paper, felt pens

Information for Leader

This session is based on the statue and the window showing St Francis.

Introduction (15 mins)

- Welcome the children and sit them where they will be able to see the window of St Francis and the statue. Look at the window and see what the children can guess about the life of St Francis from the window. What birds and animals can they see? Can they name any of them?
- Read the story as below, or from another version.

Activity (30 mins)

- Look again at the window and see how it reflects the life of St Francis.
- Divide the children into two groups and swap activities half way through.
- Make fir cone bird feeders. Mix lard and bird seed and dried fruit together. Push this into the fir cones, and then roll the cones in bird seed. Tie a piece of string or ribbon round the top to hang them by. Children can take these back to school to hang, or hang some in the churchyard.
- Using what they have heard about the life of St Francis, ask the children to design a cover for a book on the life of St Francis. What are the main elements of the story that they would want to see on the cover? If they have time, what would they want to say about St Francis in the blurb on the back to the book?

Plenary (10 mins)

- Look at some of the book covers and pick out the important aspects of the life of St Francis from them as a reminder to the children.
- There is a prayer called the prayer of St Francis. It may not have been written by St Francis, but it does reflect how he viewed the world. Read the prayer. The children can listen, or make it their prayer by joining in with 'Amen' at the end.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.



heritage learning welcome



Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.

- If the children know the song, *Make me a channel of your peace* based on the prayer of St Francis, they could sing this to end the session, or you could play a version if you have one available.

Extension

- Look at other prayers and poems by St Francis.
- Find Assisi on a map. Find out about the churches St Francis restored.
- Make a collage of animals and birds and add in prayers and poems about animals.
- Find out more about the Franciscan order and what they do today.
- Compare the window at St Stephens with All Saints, Stanton on the Wolds (<http://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/stanton-on-the-wolds/hglass.php>)

St Francis

Around the year 1182 a man called John Bernadone was born in the Italian town of Assisi. His father was a very rich man who bought and sold beautiful cloth for people to make clothes from. As he grew up all his friends called him Francis, because his father liked all things French and his mother came from France.

As a young man he was very popular and was often the leader of his group of friends. He enjoyed the fine life he had, spending his father's money and having a good time. He decided to become a soldier, hoping to have some adventures and become even more popular. He certainly had some adventures; he was captured and held prisoner for a year, which gave him plenty of time to think about what he was doing.

On his way home from soldiering he met with a beggar, and much to the beggar's amazement, Francis didn't just throw a few coins at the beggar, but took off his armour and insisted on swapping clothes with the beggar! Francis walked off in the beggar's old clothes; I guess the beggar sold the armour to buy some food.

Francis began to realise that the rich extravagant life he was leading was not what he really wanted. One day, while he was in the broken-down church of St Damian, he heard a voice say, 'Francis, build my church.' He knew repairing churches needed a lot of money, so he sold some of his father's cloth and a horse. His father was very angry about this, and demanded the money back. At this time Francis turned his back on his old life, on the friends and the money and benefits, and began to work for God's church and to wear a simple farm worker's tunic instead of all his previous finery.

He lived a very simple life, and soon other people were following his ways and living alongside him, rebuilding old churches and helping the sick and poor. Francis wrote a set of rules that his followers were to live by and so the Franciscans were started. The rules were based on three verses in the Bible:

- If you would be perfect, go sell all that you have and give to the poor and then you will have treasure in heaven, come follow me. (Luke 18:22)
- Take nothing for your journey. (Luke 9:3)
- If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. (Matthew 16:24)

Francis spent a lot of time travelling and telling people about Jesus. He cared very much for animals. It is said he would preach to the birds as he walked along, beginning one talk, 'My brothers, birds, you should praise your creator very much and always love him; he gave you feathers to clothe you, wings so that you can fly, and whatever else was necessary for you. . .'

There is a story that he once rescued a hare from a trap, and after he had held it for a while to calm it down, he tried to send it away, but the hare refused to go and kept coming back to Francis. It is also said that when a fisherman gave him a large fish, he took it and put it back in the water rather than kill it and eat it.

By the time he died in 1226, he had 5000 followers. Two years after his death he was made a saint. Because of his love of animals, he is the special saint for animals.

