Drama Workshop
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

Scripture: Exodus chapters 5-15

Memory Verse: Romans 8:38-39 (NIV) Same as the kids' Bibles.
"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Bonus Verse: Exodus 15:2 “The Lord is my strength and my song.”

Drama Workshop: “Crossing the Red Sea”

Objectives:
Please preview the rotation objectives found on the Overview Sheet.

Lesson Objectives:
At the end of the session, the students will be able to:

• locate Exodus and identify it as the second book of the Bible.
• connect this story to the stories of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and remember God’s promise to them.
• relate the story of God calling Moses to lead His people out of Egypt.
• understand that God used Moses in spite of his many faults (bad temper, poor speaker).
• know that Moses had faith that God would help him lead His people.
• begin to understand our faith in one true God who keeps His promises to His people.

Background comments on the story:
As you prayerfully contemplate the story and prepare to teach:

• Take the time to read all of Exodus as a single adventure story. (If time is short, read Exodus 1-15).
• God calls Moses to serve Him. Moses is uncertain of himself and his abilities of course, speaking for God in front of Pharaoh is no easy thing. Moses finally runs out of arguments, God becomes impatient (4:14), and Moses goes. But he is not alone. Aaron is with him, and so is God ("I will be with you," 3:12 reminiscent of Matthew 28:20 and numerous other statements by God and Jesus).
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

• The first nine plagues are explainable natural phenomena (possibly set off by a volcanic eruption). But the timing is God's. The point of the story is that the Lord is truly God, more powerful that the Pharaoh, who is said to be the Sun God incarnate.
• During the course of the plagues, Pharaoh vacillates over letting the Israelites go, but his heart is hardened again and again. So it is not a surprise when he decides to chase the Israelites.
• Finally, regarding the tossing of the Egyptian army into the sea: "The moral problem cannot be erased from the story. Children are chagrined over the deluged Egyptians; the famous rabbinic comment, that the angels did not celebrate after the miracle, underlines the problem. The Bible is less interested in fulfilling some perceived moral code than in exalting the figure of Yahweh. Yahweh's glorification is the unmistakable theme of this story." (Michael E. Williams, The Storyteller's Companion to the Bible: Exodus - Joshua. Abingdon, 1992.)

TIPS FOR STORYTELLING:

Read the story in several translations of the Bible and Bible storybooks to see other ways to tell it.

• It is not necessary to use a deep male voice for God. But do stand tall and speak with authority when God is speaking.
• Think about Moses' motivation and feelings, especially during the burning bush scene. He probably does not whine and stutter, but he does not speak with great confidence, either. Try to show him becoming more confident and sure in the course of the story.
• Some of the plagues are a little funny (as long as they aren't happening to you!). Don't be afraid to exaggerate things like frogs jumping, gnats flying in ears, and your reaction to gross boils.
• "But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go" (or "Pharaoh said NO!" or something of that nature) should be repeated after each plague. After the second time, your listeners will catch on and repeat the phrase with you if you pause and nod slightly as you get to the line.
• if you cannot learn this story by heart (to tell it in your own words), read and reread it until you are very comfortable with it. Then you will be able to look up and make eye contact and interact with your listeners, which will help bring the story to life for them.

For additional information on biblical storytelling, see the manual by Amy Crane in the Rotation Documents: Workshop Manuals area of the lesson exchange.
Drama Workshop
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

Props, scenery, costumes, and supplies: pyramids sea, and desert; burning bush (branch with red crepe paper wrapped around it); walking stick; pillar of cloud/fire (poster board on paint stick -- one side fiery, one side cotton balls); Red Sea (two pieces blue fabric on dowels so two people can hold together and then separate); chariots and helmets.

Plagues Props: blood (red ribbon on dowel), frogs, gnats, flies, locusts (pictures of lots of each on large sheets of paper), death of animals (turn drawing of cow so feet are up in the air), boils (point at each other and act grossed out or use dot stickers), hail (ping pong balls or cotton balls thrown at each other), darkness (turn off lights), death of eldest son (angel of death -- black ribbon tied to dowel); scripts for God speaking from burning bush and plagues; microphone for God's voice (optional).

Lesson:
Open by introducing yourself and then tell or review the story as it is written below. Read the scripture: Exodus 3:1-15

MOSES LEADS GOD'S PEOPLE
Long ago, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, and that a bountiful land would belong to his heirs. Well, Abraham and his wife Sarah were old. Sarah laughed at the idea that she would be a mother at her age, but a son was born to them. They named him Isaac, which means "laughter."

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob had twelve sons; Joseph was his favorite. Joseph's jealous brothers sold him into slavery, and he ended up in Egypt. But God was with Joseph, and Joseph worked hard. Eventually he became the Pharaoh's right hand man.

So when there was a famine in all the nations, the sons of Jacob came to Egypt looking for food. Joseph was able to help them. And the children of Jacob, or the children of Israel, as he was sometimes called, came to live in Egypt, in the region of Goshen. And the Pharaohs remembered Joseph for three hundred years.

And then there was a Pharaoh who knew nothing about Joseph. "These Israelites are so numerous and strong that they are a threat to us. Why, if there were a war, they could side with our enemies and take control of the country." So the Egyptians put cruel slave drivers over the Israelites.
But still the Israelites increased in number. So Pharaoh commanded that all the Israelite baby boys be tossed into the Nile River.

During this time, Jochebed and Amram had a beautiful baby boy. They were able to hide him for three months. But he was getting too big. So Jochebed made a basket and gently set the precious baby in this small boat into the Nile.

A princess, the Pharaoh's daughter, came to the river to bathe. She discovered the baby and decided to adopt him. The baby was named Moses, which means "one who pulls out," for the princess pulled him out of the Nile River. And this Israelite was raised in the palace as a grandson of the Pharaoh himself.

Now Moses knew he was one of the Hebrew people. And one day when he saw one of the Egyptian slave masters abusing a slave, he grew angry, and killed the Egyptian. This act did not stay a secret long, and Moses was forced to flee Egypt.

Moses went to live in the land of Midian. There he married Zipporah, and had two sons.

Forty years later, the Pharaoh had died. The son who took his place was no different, and still the Israelites groaned and cried for help. Their cries went up to God, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

And so one day Moses was caring for his flocks in the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain. There he saw a bush that was burning but it was not burning up! "How strange."

The Lord called to Moses from the middle of the bush: "Moses! Moses!"

"Yes, Here I am."

"Do not come any closer. Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." Moses covered his face, for he was afraid to look at God.
God said, "I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard their cry to be rescued from their slave drivers. So I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them out of Egypt to a spacious and fertile land. Now I am sending you to the Pharaoh so that you can lead my people out of his country."

"Me?! I'm nobody. How can I go to the Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

"I will be with you. When you bring the people out of Egypt you will worship me on this mountain. That will be the proof that I have sent you."

"When I go to the Israelites and say The God of our ancestors has sent me to you,' they will ask me What is his name?' What shall I tell them?"

"I am who I am. You must tell them The one who is called I AM has sent me to you.' This is my name forever. My people will listen to what you say to them. Then you must go to the Pharaoh and say The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has revealed himself to us. Now let us travel into the desert to make sacrifices to our God.' I know the Pharaoh will not let you go. But I will use my power and will punish Egypt by doing terrible things there. After that he will let you go."

"No Lord, do not send me. I have never been a good speaker."

"Who gives man his mouth? I will help you to speak, and I will tell you what to say. Now go!"

"No Lord. Please send someone else."

"Then take your brother Aaron. You can speak to him and tell him what you want to say. I will help both of you to speak and will tell you what to do. And take this walking stick with you for with it you will perform miracles."

So Moses, Zipporah, and their two sons set off for Egypt. Moses was now 80 years old.

Moses and Aaron met with the Israelite leaders. They told them everything the Lord had said. And the Israelites believed, and bowed down and worshiped the Lord.
Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh and said, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says, Let my people go, that they may hold a festival in the desert to honor me."

The Pharaoh said, "What do you mean by making the people neglect their work? Get back to work!" And then he called his slave drivers together and told them to push their workers even harder. And the Israelites complained bitterly.

Moses called out to the Lord, "Lord, why do you mistreat your people? Why did you send me? The Pharaoh is now treating your people even more cruelly."

"Now you will see what I will do to the Pharaoh. I will force him to let my people go. In fact, he will drive them out of his land. Now you and Aaron must return to him and say as I command."

Then came ten plagues, each one worse than the one before. And in each plague, the region of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was spared.

First, Aaron struck the surface of the Nile River with the walking stick, and the water turned into blood. All over the land water turned into blood even in pots and pitchers. All the fish died. It smelled bad. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord sent frogs. They covered the land. They jumped on everyone and everything they even stole bread that was baking in ovens! But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord turned the dust into gnats; nasty little bugs that covered all the people and all the animals. They flew in eyes, ears, noses, mouths. They were annoying. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

The Lord sent flies. A cloud of fat, black flies that buzzed around and crawled into everything. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

The Lord sent a terrible disease, and all the animals of the Egyptians died the cattle, horses, sheep, goats, donkeys. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.
Drama Workshop
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

Moses threw ashes into the air, and it settled on the Egyptian people and became boils, open sores all over the people's skin. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses raised his walking stick toward the sky and the Lord sent thunder and lightning and hail and fire. All over Egypt the hail struck down people and plants and animals. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses raised his walking stick and the Lord sent an east wind that brought the locusts. Locusts that ate everything the hail did not destroy. They came in swarms and settled over the whole country. Not a green thing was left on any tree or plant in all the land of Egypt. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses lifted his hand toward the sky and there was heavy darkness throughout Egypt for three days. The Egyptians could not see each other and no one left his house. But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord said to Moses, "I will send only one more punishment on the Pharaoh and his people. Then he will make you leave. Now speak to the Israelites and have them prepare as I direct you. I will go through the land of Egypt and kill every first-born male, human and animal. But I will pass over the homes of the Israelites, if they are marked with blood on the doorposts as I have instructed."

At midnight, the Lord killed all the first-born sons in Egypt, from the Pharaoh's son to the son of the prisoner in the dungeon. There was loud crying throughout Egypt, because there was not one home without a dead son.

The Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron: "Get out! Leave my country. Go and worship your Lord, as you asked. Take your wives and children, your sheep, goats, and cattle, and leave."

The Israelites quickly packed their things and left. During the day the Lord led the Israelites through the desert in a pillar of cloud. During the night, He went in front of them in a pillar of fire to give them light.

When the Pharaoh was told that the people had escaped, he and his officials changed their minds and said, "What have we done? We have
lost our slaves!" The Lord made the Pharaoh stubborn; he got his war chariot and his army ready. They pursued the Israelites and caught up with them where they were camped by the Red Sea.

When the Israelites saw the Pharaoh and his army approaching they were terrified. They asked Moses, "Why did you bring us to the desert to die?"

The Lord said to Moses, "Why are you crying out for help? Lift up your walking stick and hold it over the sea. The water will divide and the Israelites will be able to walk through the sea on dry ground. I will make the Egyptians stubborn and I will gain honor when I defeat them."

Moses held his staff over the sea and the Lord sent a strong east wind. The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptians followed. When the Israelites were safely through, Moses again held out his staff and the water came back over the Egyptians and their chariots and their horses.

When the Israelites saw the great power with which the Lord had defeated the Egyptians, they stood in awe of the Lord; and they had faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

And Miriam, Moses' sister, led all the women in music and dancing: "Sing to the Lord, because he has won a glorious victory; Sing to the Lord, for He has thrown the horses and their riders into the sea!"

And Moses and God led the people on into the wilderness, on their way to the Promised Land.

"MOSES LEADS GOD’S PEOPLE" was adapted by Amy Crane for telling based upon Exodus 1-15, Today’s English Version
Drama Workshop
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

Before acting out the story:

• Review the characters: Moses, God, Aaron, Zipporah (Moses' wife), Pharaoh, magicians, Israelites, army, Miriam
• Where did story take place: Midian, Egypt, desert, Red Sea.
• How would you feel if you were: Moses when confronted with burning bush/God, Moses when Pharaoh kept changing his mind, Pharaoh after his son died, Pharaoh after he realized he had no more slaves, Israelites cornered in front of the Red Sea, Israelites celebrating after crossing the Red Sea?
• Outline story highlights and how best to portray them
• Practice movements/emotions: bowing, fear, sadness, anger, reacting to plagues.
• With a partner: improvise dialogue between God and Moses at the burning bush or between Moses and Pharaoh about leaving and plagues. After a few minutes partners switch roles.

Assign parts and act out the story using the narrator's script that follows (focus on the story beginning with the burning bush through Miriam dancing on the other side of the Red Sea). Pause where indicated. Encourage the children to improvise based on their understanding of the story, but be prepared to coach them or give them part of a line ask the other students to help. Because this is a long story with a cast of thousands, consider acting out only certain scenes or reassigning parts after each scene so that all can participate. See the supplies list for suggested items to symbolize the plagues. If time permits, reassign parts and act it out again.

Pulling it all together (closing discussion):
• God used the burning bush to call Moses to a special place. Have you ever been in a place that felt special? Do you have a special place where you feel closer to God? What do you do there?
• What do you think God meant when he said "I am who I am. You must tell them, the one who is called I AM has sent me to you." (Exodus 3:14)?
• What sort of person is Moses? Would you trust him to carry your message to Pharaoh or lead you to safety? Did Moses trust God?
• Have you ever felt like Moses when you were called to speak in front of others? I wonder why speaking up is so hard for Moses and other people? What helps Moses feel better (or does he?)? What helps you when you feel shy or timid?
Drama Workshop
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

Closing prayer: I will sing to the Lord: The Lord is my strong defender; He is the one who has saved me. He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father's God, and I will sing about His greatness. Lord, who among the gods is like you? Who is like you, wonderful in holiness? Who can work miracles and mighty acts like yours? You stretched out your right hand, and the earth swallowed our enemies. Faithful to your promise, you led the people you had rescued; by your strength you guided them to your sacred land. You, Lord, will be king forever. Amen.

(excerpted from Moses' and the Israelites' song: Exodus 15: 1, 2, 11-13, 18)

MOSES LEADS GOD'S PEOPLE
Narrator's Script
(adapted by Amy Crane from Exodus 1-15, Today's English Version)

Long ago, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, and that a bountiful land would belong to his heirs. Abraham's descendants settled in Egypt, and for 300 years were very happy. Then a Pharaoh put the Israelites into slavery. The Israelites groaned and cried for help. Their cries went up to God, and He remembered His covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

And so one day Moses was caring for his flocks in the desert and came to Sinai, the holy mountain. There he saw a bush that was burning but it was not burning up!

[dialog between Moses and God]

So Moses, Zipporah, and their two sons set off for Egypt. Moses was now 80 years old.

Moses and Aaron met with the Israelite leaders. They told them everything the Lord had said. And the Israelites believed, and bowed down and worshiped the Lord.

[** for shorter version, begin here: "Long ago, God called Moses to go to Pharaoh to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. ...]

Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh.

[dialog between Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh]

After they left, Pharaoh was angry. He called his slave drivers together and told them to push their workers even harder. And the Israelites complained bitterly.

Moses called out to the Lord.

[dialog between Moses and God: Moses asks, "why did you send me? It's worse now." God: "I knew this would happen. I will punish the Egyptians and they will force you to leave."]
Then came ten plagues, each one worse than the one before. And in each plague, the region of Goshen, where the Israelites lived, was spared.

First, Aaron struck the surface of the Nile River with the walking stick, and the water turned into blood. All over the land water turned into blood even in pots and pitchers. All the fish died. It smelled bad.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord sent frogs. They covered the land. They jumped on everyone and everything they even stole bread that was baking in ovens!  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord turned the dust into gnats; nasty little bugs that covered all the people and all the animals. They flew in eyes, ears, noses, mouths. They were annoying.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

The Lord sent flies. A cloud of fat, black flies that buzzed around and crawled into everything.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

The Lord sent a terrible disease, and all the animals of the Egyptians died the cattle, horses, sheep, goats, donkeys.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses threw ashes into the air, and it settled on the Egyptian people and became boils, open sores all over the people's skin.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses raised his walking stick toward the sky, and the Lord sent thunder and lightning and hail and fire. All over Egypt the hail struck down people and plants and animals.  

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.
Moses raised his walking stick, and the Lord sent an east wind that brought the locusts. Locusts that ate everything the hail did not destroy. They came in swarms and settled over the whole country. Not a green thing was left on any tree or plant in all the land of Egypt. [show it]

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Moses lifted his hand toward the sky and there was heavy darkness throughout Egypt for three days. The Egyptians could not see each other and no one left his house. [show it]

But still Pharaoh would not let the children of Israel go.

Then the Lord spoke to Moses.

[Dialog between Moses and God: God tells Moses he will pass through Egypt and kill oldest sons. He will pass over Israelites if their houses are marked with blood as he directed.]

At midnight, the Lord killed all the first-born sons in Egypt, from the Pharaoh’s son to the son of the prisoner in the dungeon. There was loud crying throughout Egypt, because there was not one home without a dead son.

The Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron.

[Dialog between Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh: Pharaoh tells them to leave.]

The Israelites quickly packed their things and left. During the day the Lord led the Israelites through the desert in a pillar of cloud. During the night He went in front of them in a pillar of fire to give them light.

When the Pharaoh was told that the people had escaped, he and his officials changed their minds.

[Pharaoh and Egyptians complain: “Why did I let the slaves go? Let’s go get them!”]

The Lord made the Pharaoh stubborn; he got his war chariot and his army ready. They pursued the Israelites and caught up with them where they were camped by the Red Sea.
Drama Workshop  
The Great Escape: Moses Leads the Israelites Out of Egypt  
Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Olympia, WA

When the Israelites saw the Pharaoh and his army approaching they were terrified.

[Israelites complain to Moses. God tells Moses what to do.]

Moses held his staff over the sea and the Lord sent a strong east wind. The Israelites went through the sea on dry ground. The Egyptians followed. When the Israelites were safely through, Moses again held out his staff and the water came back over the Egyptians and their chariots and their horses.  [show it.]

When the Israelites saw the great power with which the Lord had defeated the Egyptians, they stood in awe of the Lord; and they had faith in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

And Miriam, Moses' sister, led all the women in music and dancing:  
Sing to the Lord, for He has won a glorious victory;  
Sing to the Lord, for He has thrown horses and riders into the sea!

[give women the song preprinted on cards so it can be done unison while the characters dance]

And Moses and God led the people on into the wilderness, on their way to the Promised Land.

-----

Lesson written by Amy Crane (amycrane@hotmail.com) for Palma Ceia Presbyterian Church in Tampa, Florida.