On your marks

Here's a simple retelling of some of the exodus story as an example of participative storytelling. It would be great down the main aisle (if you have one) of a church for an all-age service.

Get set

You'll need a chair, two sticks about the length of a hockey stick, two pieces of blue material about 1 m x 2 m (voile is only about £1.99 a metre and looks fantastic). Optional extras are strips of cloth as headbands for the slaves and gold card circlets for headbands for the soldiers. Swords are not a good idea – imaginary ones are far more terrifying.

Go!

Now for this story I need a hero *(Choose a Moses and give her/him one stick)*. I also need a villain *(choose a Pharaoh, sit her/him on a chair and give her/him the other stick as a sceptre)*. I need people to operate the scenery *(Spread out the blue cloths side by side and touching lengthways and choose one person to hold each end of each piece – four people in all)*. Now I need the rest of you to choose – you could be a poor downtrodden slave *(send them to sit by Moses)*. Or you could be a bloodthirsty vicious cruel and savage soldier *(send them to stand behind Pharaoh with their arms folded and mean expressions on their faces)*.

Now, as I tell the story, could you act it out?

Oh! *(drop to your knees)* We were miserable! We Hebrews had been slaves in Egypt for three hundred years! We had to work for the rotten old Egyptians *(shake your fists at Pharaoh)* in their brickworks – we had to mix up sand and mud and straw *(as you say these actions, do them and encourage the Hebrews to copy you)* and mould it into bricks and bake it – all in the scorching heat of the sun. And all so that the rotten old Egyptians could build their pyramids! Boo! *(Shake fists again)* We were so miserable, we groaned at God *(groan)*. And one day, when the time was right, he heard our groaning and he sent his friend Moses to rescue us from the Egyptians. Moses went to Pharaoh and said: 'God says, let my people go!' *(Get Moses to say it)* But Pharaoh said, 'NO!' *(Get Pharaoh to say it and in the rest of this part of the story)* And Moses went to Pharaoh many times and said 'God says, let my people go!' but each time Pharaoh said, 'NO!' God sent terrible things on the Egyptians to make Pharaoh change his mind, but each time, Pharaoh said 'NO!' In the end God sent something so terrible – he killed the eldest child of all the Egyptians – that Pharaoh shouted, 'GET OUT!'

Moses led the people out of Egypt across the desert to the shores of the Reed Sea. *(Plod across the room with the Hebrews to the edge of the Sea)* And because they couldn't go any further, we set up camp. But, oh horrors! Oh terror! What should we see in the distance but the mighty Egyptian army! Pharaoh had changed his mind about letting us go! And there in the distance – in slow motion please! – were the terrifying Egyptians galloping towards us – in slow motion please! In fact, on the

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spot would be brilliant! – in their speedy chariots, their swords glinting in the sunshine!

We moaned at God *(do so)* and we groaned at Moses *(do so)* and we said, 'If we were going to die, why couldn't we have died in Egypt without coming all this way?' But Moses trusted God. He stretched out his stick across the Reed Sea, and we watched in amazement as God made the waters part, making a dry path down the middle! *(The two sides of the Sea are lifted and held vertically to make two walls with a path between them)* We set out as fast as we could towards the other side and freedom. But the Egyptians came after us! In slow motion! Pausing in the middle of the sea! But just as all the Hebrews reached the far side and freedom, Moses stretched out his stick again… and God made the waters of the Reed Sea crash down on the Egyptians, washing them all away! *(You may not get to the end of this sentence as the Sea will have got the idea and will have covered the Egyptians who will drown with great glee and gusto, thereby drowning out any nice theological maxim you may have had in mind for the final line.)*