### **OPENING QUESTIONS**

What is the intended use/audience (congregational singing, large or small group gathering, recording, coffee house, club, etc.)?

If corporate worship, how and when could it be used during a worship gathering (Call To Worship, Communion Song, etc.)?

# FORM/ STRUCTURE

What is the form or structure of the piece: verse/chorus/verse, hymn-style (may or may not have a chorus, set metrical pattern), does it have a bridge, a pre-chorus, etc.?

Does the form suit the piece?

In a verse/chorus format, is the chorus the logical conclusion to the verses?

Does the bridge (if existing) add a new dimension to the story?

Does the story/plot progress logically in the form?

Does the rhythm/melody/chord pattern change from verse to chorus to bridge?

### **STORY**

Do the lyrics accurately express theological truth?

What is the song about? Does it revolve around a central idea or event? Is it implied or stated? Is the subject unclear or obscure? Do the lyrics serve this central theme or are they scattered?

Does the plot develop with each verse or is it a restatement of the same idea over and over?

Are key questions answered so that people know what's going on (who, what, when, where)?

Are any of the lines "filler"? Do they seem to exist merely for the sake of rhyme or maintaining form?

### PROSODY (THE COMBINATION OF MUSIC AND LYRICS)

Do the lyrics and melody belong together (ex. Happy lyrics, happy melody)? If not, is there a good reason (ex. upbeat music set to sad lyrics to indicate the singer is "fiddling while Rome burns")?

Are the syllabic accents natural or have you "put the wrong emPHAsis on the wrong sylLAble?

Are there sustained notes on unimportant words or unpleasant vowel/consonant sounds?

Are open vowels on sustained notes, creating a sound that is pleasant to hear and sing?

Could a singing congregation breathe and phrase correctly (is it "singable")?

Are there any tongue twisters (ex. she sells sea shells by the sea shore)?

#### **MUSIC**

Is the melody accessible? Is it memorable and "catchy," yet musically interesting?

How is the harmonization? Do the melody and the harmonies (chords) work well together?

Is there enough musical variety between the various movements (chorus, verse, etc.)?

Is there too much variety of melody for congregants to remember or think of it as a unified song?

Do you have dynamics —peaks and valleys? Is there a sense, perhaps moving into the chorus, that you are building to a climax where the melody soars while expressing the main theme (in the case of a hymn without a chorus, this often occurs on the fifth and sixth lines of an eight-lined verse —ex. "In Christ Alone")?

## TITLE/ BEGINNING

Is the title a synopsis of the song?

Would listeners know what the title was after one hearing?

Is there a strong or interesting first line?

Do the first few lines establish the tone well?

Would a later part of the song (perhaps the second verse) make for a better opening?

### POETIC DEVICES/ LANGUAGE

Do you use vivid, concrete images?

Do the images clearly serve the theme?

Are the metaphors and similes apt?

Are there scriptural allusions, quotes, or paraphrases?

Does the writer make use of sound repetition?

- (a) Assonance (repetition of vowel sounds)?
- (b) Consonance (repetition of consonant sounds)?
- (c) Alliteration (repetition of the initial consonant sound)?
- (d) Are key words or phrases repeated (repetend)?

Are concrete nouns and verbs allowed to carry the lyrics?

(e) Are the lyrics free of cliché, or do they find ways to play off cliché and make an old image fresh again?

### **SYNTAX**

Is the diction consistent? Any weird word choices?

Are verb tenses consistent?

Do pronouns show who is doing the thinking, feeling, acting?

Is it clear when someone else is speaking (for instance, when "man" speaks in one line and "God" in another)?

Are there clutter words that could be removed (sort of, very, somewhat, etc.)?

Are there trendy, but ultimately dated, slang expressions?

Have you "odd use of sentence structure made" (usually a rhyme to serve)?

#### **RHYME**

Is the rhyme scheme consistent?

Are there tricky or unnatural rhymes?

Do the rhymes serve and enhance the story, or has the story been sacrificed for the sake of rhyme?

#### **ENDING**

Is there closure or does the song seem to "stop on a dime"?

Does the closure seem artificial, forced, or overwritten?

Is there a better way to end the piece?

## FINAL OBSERVATIONS

Does the song combine objective truth with subjective response (neither merely a statement of theological truth nor a dose of the writer's subjective feelings)?

Can the song be tightened in any way?

Could any parts of the song be developed more?

If you are filling in these answers for another writer's song, remember that the more specific you are the greater help you will be to the writer in the revision process. Which lines could be cut? Which ideas or images need expansion? What alternate chords could be used?