

**A REVIEW OF  
“GOD’S MISSION, GOD’S SONG”  
(2006/2007 UMW Mission Study by Joyce D. Sohl)  
By Mildred Dillon**

There is a difference between a book “report” and a book “review.” A “report” outlines the purpose and the content of the book with some information about the author. A “review” is a personal critique of the contents of the book. Having clarified that, I would like to first give a brief book “report” of this study.

**AUTHOR:** Joyce D. Sohl has served as Treasurer and Deputy General Secretary of the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Church and has taught in Regional and Conference Schools of Christian Mission for over 30 years. She is also a writer and a musician and is a member of the *Global Praise* working Group of the General Board of Global Ministries. She lives in White Plains, New York.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this study is:

1. To gain an understanding of the role of music in the mission of the church;
2. To study mission hymns regarding their biblical and theological understanding of mission;
3. To determine the relationship between mission hymns and the missionary movement;
4. To expand our understanding of, and participation in, God’s mission through the use of global song.

**OUTLINE OF THE STUDY:**

Introduction  
Six Chapters (each with a specific emphasis)  
Bibliography (very lengthy)  
Hymns (words and music of 77 hymns)  
Index  
Study Guide

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And now for a prayerful “review” of this study.

Within this study are some great definitions of what “mission” is, and wonderful biblical passages that have always inspired Christians to “go forth and make disciples of all nations.” (Christ’s Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18-29)

Also included are some of the great hymns that have been written in response to this commission and to God’s love seen through Jesus Christ. It is this reviewer’s opinion that this study should be called: “God’s Mission, the People’s Response in Song.” God’s “song” can be found in John 3:16. It is his “love song.” “*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.*” (NIV)

All our worship, all our mission work, all our songs, all our living is a response to this great LOVE GIFT!

A major concern regarding the material found in this study is that it is too complex. There are outlines for four sessions in the Study Guide found in the back of the book which have enough material to expand to many more sessions. It will also take a leader with a background in missions, biblical studies and music to properly present this study.

I also found the organization of the material difficult to follow. The use of “drama” to tie the sections together seemed “forced” and unnecessary to this reviewer. The hymns and indexes to the hymns are placed before the Study Guide. It would be helpful if these were switched. It is customary, and more accessible, to have indexes at the end of the book.

This could be a college course: “Ethnomusicology and Mission 101.” Ethnomusicology is the study of the music and musical practices of a particular people and a study of the role of music within the day-to-day practices of a people. Ms. Sohl has chosen many hymns that are put to the music of the culture in which missionaries are serving, or new words put to familiar hymn tunes to emphasize a need. As a musician I found some of these awkward for group singing.

I found a subtle inclusion of songs that promote an agenda. This shows in the hymns “God of Our Foremothers,” “I Am Your Mother/Earth Prayer” and in the hymn “The Coming of the King.” Ms. Sohl, herself, states that the hymn words are from a feminist perspective (“...it was through a woman that Christ was born and the resurrection story told.”)

There are also Peace hymns, Environmental Hymns, Justice Hymns and Poverty Hymns. Most of these are just words. How can they be sung?

Ms. Sohl has spent untold hours researching and writing this study. Would I recommend this study? Yes, but as just *one* resource for the subject of “Mission Hymns.” I would suggest that a missionary be invited and asked to share how music is used in her/his mission work; how music has enhanced their work; and what particular hymns were effective.

I would also suggest that the leader look up stories behind the writing of the hymns chosen for use in this study. What was in the heart of the composer of the music and the writer of the words? How are you challenged to be “in mission” when you sing these hymns? (There are many fine books available about the stories behind the hymns.) I would also suggest that more of the hymns of Charles Wesley be used. They are a part of our Methodist heritage and his words challenge us to be “in mission.”

In closing let me share my favorite love song of God found in His Word in Zephaniah 3:17; *“The Lord your God is near, He is mighty to save, He takes great delight in you, He quiets you with His love and He rejoices over you with singing!”*

Let our response to this be to “Sing Praises to His Name,” to go out and share the “Good News” of Jesus Christ and to show His compassion and love to those who are hurting.

**Mildred C. Dillion** and her husband, C. A., have four sons and one daughter and numerous grandchildren. Mildred is a member of Edenton Street United Methodist Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. With a degree in public school vocal music, she has taught in Raleigh City schools and has directed choirs in St. Petersburg, Florida; Rochester, New York and Raleigh, North Carolina. Mildred was instrumental in launching a highly effective prayer ministry for Edenton Street United Methodist Church. Mildred's most recent lay ministries are working with (mentoring) Senior High girls organized into a group called "The King's Princesses" and training lay people to give their "faith story" at Edenton Street UMC. She is a RENEW Network speaker, specializing in workshops on prayer.