

## Paper B

Resolutions referred to Synods

### Resolution 3 of General Assembly 2016 (pp20-23 Book of Reports –

[http://www.urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2016/assembly\\_reports\\_16.pdf](http://www.urc.org.uk/images/General-Assemblies/Assembly2016/assembly_reports_16.pdf) )

Section 5 of the Structure of the United Reformed Church concerns Appeals. For example, if a matter is considered at a Church Meeting and then some members wish the Synod to review the decision, they may appeal. Similarly, a synod decision may be appealed to General Assembly (which will generally arrange for a Commission of five people to hear the appeal on its behalf).

Section 5, as it stands at present, has been found over many years, both by those who have had to operate it and by those who have been involved in cases, to be too vague. It needs to be made more precise. The new proposals do several things to improve it. They refer to three sorts of procedure:

An **Appeal** is appropriate when a council's decision aggrieves individuals (or some other council) who wish to challenge it, and have standing to do so. They can appeal to a wider council of the Church.

A **Reference**, on the other hand, can be made by a more local council of the Church to a wider council, if the first council wishes a difficulty arising in the work it oversees to be considered at a wider level.

Finally, a **Constitutional Review** would be needed when, for example, a wider council finds that a more local council has acted beyond its powers, or has taken action contrary to the Basis of Union. The wider council can initiate this review itself.

These matters must be set out in the Structure of the URC, a constitutional document which outlines rights and duties in quite a general way. As a proposed constitutional change, they need to be considered by synods, as well as by General Assembly. However, these brief constitutional paragraphs will also be backed up by more detailed Rules of Procedure – spelling out what you do when one of these situations arises. The Rules of Procedure, being practical rather than constitutional, are not such a permanent document as the Structure. So Mission Council will update the Rules, if and when the changes to the Structure receive proper approval around the Church.

These processes seem formal. But they can sometimes help us. We hope we shall not need to use them often. However, when we do, they need to be clear, so that we can avoid getting into a serious tangle. This revision of the Structure is intended to set out some guidelines of principle, so that we shall have a basis for regulating these situations in practice that is clearer and fairer to everyone.

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### Resolution 42 of General Assembly 2016

Resolution 42 is unfinished business from the 2014 General Assembly. We value very highly the URC Youth representation on our councils, and realise that many young people who are heavily involved in the life of the United Reformed Church have not yet become Church Members. Can these young people be appointed to represent URC Youth at Synod or Assembly, if they are not members of the URC? This resolution provides a way of allowing them to do so, if they have the appropriate confidence of their Local Church or their peers. The resolution also corrects an anomaly over the age limit that defines youth.

John Proctor, General Secretary, August 2016