

# Paper M3

Clerk

Resolution 19 – a way forward

Church 2015  
United  
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Church 2015  
Church

# Paper M3



## Clerk

### Resolution 19 – a way forward

#### Basic Information

<b>Contact name and email address</b>	Michael Hopkins clerk@urc.org.uk
<b>Action required</b>	Resolution.
<b>Draft resolution(s)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Resolution 19(A) is withdrawn and resolution 19(B)(4) is not put.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Resolutions 19 (B)(1) and 19(B)(3) and 19(B)(5) are not put. If resolution 2 is passed, resolution 3 will be proposed:</b></li> <li>3. <b>Mission Council instructs the Law and Polity Advisory Group, consulting the Children's and Youth Work Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to bring recommendations about the appropriateness or otherwise of those who are not members of the United Reformed Church being voting members of the Councils of the United Reformed Church; and to report by March 2016.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Mission Councils rescinds its decision of November 2014 to extend the consultation on Resolutions 19(B)(2) and 19(E) to 31 March 2016, and revises that that date to 31 December 2015, with a view to making decisions on ratification at its meeting in March 2016.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Mission Council instructs the clerk to issue a definitive briefing on the status of this resolution to synod moderators and clerks as soon as possible.</b></li> </ol>

#### Summary of Content

<b>Subject and aim(s)</b>	To move forward several matters of impasse on Resolution 19
<b>Main points</b>	Suggested ways the Church may wish to move forward with some governance matters.
<b>Previous relevant documents</b>	Paper M2 of March Mission Council 2014 General Assembly Book of Reports 2014, pages 50-57 General Assembly order paper, Saturday 5 July 2014 General Assembly Record 2014, pages 15-17 Paper M4 of November Mission Council 2014
<b>Consultation has taken place with...</b>	General secretary, Law and Polity Advisory Group (part), synod clerks (slightly earlier in the process), Children's and Youth Committee (part)

#### Summary of Impact

<b>Financial</b>	n/a
<b>External (e.g. ecumenical)</b>	n/a

## Resolution 19 – a way forward

1. Resolution 19 of the 2014 General Assembly began as an administrative tidying up exercise. I suspect most people will agree that trying to understand what was trying to be done has turned into something approaching a nightmare. This was, unavoidably, complicated by the Assembly having three different clerks and two different general secretaries in eight months.
2. The resolution(s) came in several parts, some of which were connected, and some of which were not.
3. Difficulties immediately arose after the 2014 Assembly, because some connected parts were passed, and others were not. Some progress was made at the November 2014 Mission Council, but it is now clear that progress in completing the whole of the resolution is likely to be impossible, and some clarity that was hoped for is not yet there.
4. The parts of resolution 19 are now set out below in straightforward language, and a possible strategy for dealing with them is then outlined. It is open to Mission Council to choose a different strategy.
5. **Resolution 19A** proposed to remove the six additional representatives from the Synod of Scotland. This has not yet been passed by either Mission Council or General Assembly. The National Synods Task Group recommend that this be withdrawn.
6. **Resolution 19B(1)** is the second part of a tidying up exercise, listing the categories of members of General Assembly who need to be members of the United Reformed Church in one list at the beginning, rather than by each category. This has been passed by Mission Council, with the addition of the FURY representatives into the list of those who do not need to be members of the United Reformed Church. However, the Children's and Youth Work Committee's desire is for that to also apply to under-26 synod representatives.
7. **Resolution 19B(2)** will have the effect of only allowing a synod to have an additional representative to substitute for their moderator when their moderator is also an officer of Assembly. This has been passed by General Assembly.
8. **Resolution 19B(3)** was the first part of the tidying up exercise, moving the place where the requirement for representatives of theological colleges to be members of the United Reformed Church was stated. This has been passed by General Assembly.
9. **Resolution 19(B)(4)** was the balancing part of 19A, which proposed to add the former Chairmen of the Congregational Union of Scotland and the former presidents of the Scottish Congregational Church to the 'college' of former moderators. This was proposed to balance 19(A), because the 1987 Proposals for Unification made explicit that there was an element of *quid pro quo*, "the special representation of the Synod is covered by the additional of six persons...to enable the national life of the URC in Scotland to be present in the General Assembly, and in recognition that former Presidents of the Congregational Union are not to be included ex officio in the Assembly" (page 45). This has been passed by General Assembly. If 19A is to be withdrawn, it is not fair for 19(B)(4) to also remain, and it was never the intention for it to do so alone.
10. **Resolution 19(B)(5)** was the first part of the tidying up exercise, moving the place where the requirement for representatives of FURY to be members of the United Reformed Church was stated. This has been passed by General Assembly.

11. **Resolutions 19(C) and 19(D)** appointed the deputy general secretaries and deputy treasurer as members of General Assembly. This has been passed by General Assembly, and is not a constitutional change, so is now effective. It is included here for completeness, not because it impacts what we do.
12. **Resolution 19(E)**, as amended, made Assembly Appointed Ministers and former Moderators of General Assembly members of the synod in which their local church is situated. This was passed by General Assembly.
13. **Resolution 19(F)** defined the membership and attendance of Mission Council. This has been passed by General Assembly, and is not a constitutional change, so is now effective. It is included here for completeness, not because it impacts what we do.
14. In order to move forward, the following resolutions are proposed:
15. **1. Resolution 19(A) is withdrawn and resolution 19(B)(4) is not put.**  
The effect of this will be to discontinue the process of making changes in respect of membership of General Assembly from the Synod of Scotland, but leaves open the option of new resolutions in the future without waiting two years.
16. **2. Resolutions 19 (B)(1) and 19(B)(3) and 19(B)(5) are not put.**  
The effect of this will be to discontinue the process of administrative tidying up (helpful, but not essential at the moment), and not making permanent changes about church membership while the group concerned is not yet satisfied. By not putting the resolutions it leaves open the option of new resolutions in the future without waiting two years.
17. If resolution 2 is passed, resolution 3 will be proposed:  
**3. Mission Council instructs the Law and Polity Advisory Group, consulting the Children's and Youth Work Committee and the Faith and Order Committee, to bring recommendations about the appropriateness or otherwise of those who are not members of the United Reformed Church being voting members of the Councils of the United Reformed Church; and to report by March 2016.**  
Some work and thinking on this has already begun, and it may be possible to report sooner if the work is ready.
18. If resolutions 1 and 2 are passed, this leaves only resolutions 19(B)(2) [only allowing a synod to have an additional representative to substitute for their moderator when their moderator is also an officer of Assembly] and 19(E) [making Assembly Appointed ministers and former moderators of General Assembly members of the synod in which their local church is situated] remaining, which have both been passed by General Assembly in the first instance, and which are thought to be the less contentious parts of the resolution. If synods were able to decide upon these at their autumn meetings in 2015, then they could return to Mission Council in March 2016, and, if ratified, become effective in time for the 2016 General Assembly.
19. **4. Mission Councils rescinds its resolution of November 2014 to extend the consultation on Resolutions 19(B)(2) and 19(E) to 31 March 2016, and now revises that that date to 31 December 2015, with a view to making decisions on ratification or otherwise at its meeting in March 2016.**
20. Whatever is passed by Mission Council, resolution 5 will be moved:  
**5. Mission Council instructs the clerk to issue a definitive briefing on the status of this resolution to synod moderators and clerks as soon as possible.**