

# Paper-weight

## *Lightening our impact on the world's forest*

Even with the dawn of the computer age and the widespread use of e-mail, paper use continues to rise in the United States. In offices, annual per person paper use is around 12,000 sheets, and predicted to rise by 50 percent over the next ten years. Per capita, paper consumption in the US is 760 pounds per year for all purposes—writing, packaging, junk mail, etc. The world's forests, which God created to be a cornerstone for life as we know it on this planet, pay the price.

### **A few relevant facts:**

- ▶ Americans consume seven times more paper per capita than the global average (with five percent of the world's population, we use 30 percent of the paper—about ten times the level considered necessary for communication and commerce).
- ▶ Every pound of paper with no recycled content requires three and a half pounds of wood, 10 pounds of water and 19 btu's of energy to produce, and creates a pound of solid waste and three pounds of CO<sub>2</sub>.
- ▶ Paper comprises about 40 percent of municipal solid waste in the US—we recycle about 45 percent of paper products, with the rest either ending up in landfills (45 percent) or as stored documents (about 10 percent).
- ▶ Globally, 55 percent of the fibers used to make paper come from virgin wood (recycled fiber contributes 38 percent, the remainder is from non-wood fibers).
- ▶ Paper production is the fifth largest consumer of industrial energy in the world, rivaling steel and iron.
- ▶ Twenty percent of the world's wood harvest is used to produce paper (about seven million acres annually).
- ▶ Half the forests that once covered the earth are now gone.
- ▶ The loss of forests increases the likelihood of flooding, affects rainfall patterns, increases soil erosion, reduces CO<sub>2</sub> absorption, destroys plant and animal habitat, and leaves humans without the beauty of God's creation.

### **Ideas for better stewardship:**

- ▶ Use paper with a high recycled content at home, at the office and in church programs. Paper with 30 percent post-consumer content uses 30 percent less wood, creates 11 percent less CO<sub>2</sub>, uses 15 percent less water, produces 15 percent less waste, and requires 13 percent less energy to produce. Paper with 100 percent post-consumer content uses no wood, creates 35 percent less CO<sub>2</sub>, uses 50 percent less water, produces 50 percent less waste, and demands 45 percent less energy. If you're already printing on paper with post-consumer content, note this on the printed piece to encourage others.
- ▶ Reuse paper that has one-side clean for taking notes, copying items for your files or printing e-mails.
- ▶ Print memos, documents and any other items that require more than a page on both sides of a piece of paper.
- ▶ Recycle all paper that you're finished with and can't otherwise reuse. This can be the final dignity accorded unwanted advertising circulars.

### **Ideas for home:**

- ▶ Keep one-side clean paper handy for leaving notes, making shopping lists, etc.
- ▶ Use rags rather than paper towels for cleaning up spills or for other cleaning chores.
- ▶ Put an end to unwanted junk mail. Send your request, along with every possible spelling and configuration of your name to: Direct Marketing Association, Mail Preference Service, PO Box 9008, Farmingdale, NY 11735-9008.
- ▶ Buy products from computer paper to toilet tissue made from paper with a high post-consumer content. Take along a previously used grocery bag when you go shopping.

### **Ideas for church:**

- ▶ Have a recycling bin in the vestibule for bulletins. Write the bulletin supplier to encourage printing on paper with a high post-consumer

content. Print minutes and write messages—and even sermons—on one-side clean paper.

- ▶ Plant trees on church property.
- ▶ Support the “If a Tree *Falls...*” project of the Church of the Brethren, restoring and protecting threatened forests in Central America.
- ▶ Make it a priority to end the use of disposable tableware at church meal events.

**Sources:** *Paper Cuts: Recovering the Paper Landscape* (WorldWatch);

[www.ofee.gov/recycled](http://www.ofee.gov/recycled)

Brethren Witness/Washington Office ♦ 337 North Carolina Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003 ♦

1-(800)-785-3246 ♦ [washington\\_office\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:washington_office_gb@brethren.org)

## ***Our Fair Share Series—Living Responsibly with Our Neighbors and God’s Earth***

*Printed on 100% one-side clean paper*