

A Call For Responsible Paper in Religious Books

Books have long been a vehicle for teaching values and creating communities of faith. In fact, the Bible is the book with the greatest circulation of all time. In keeping with the virtues of stewardship and care for Creation found in the scriptures, we are asking all book publishers of the Bible and other sacred texts and all publishers of educational and recreational books for the religious community to use paper with the best environmental attributes possible.

Why Paper and Books?

The beneficial uses of paper are boundless and there is no doubting the important role that paper plays in modern society. At the same time, however, it is estimated that global growth in pulp, paper, and publishing will increase by 77% between 1995 and 2020. It has come to our attention that this rate of increase is impacting rare and threatened forest types and communities tied to them in North America and beyond. In the Canadian Boreal Forest, for example, it is estimated that 65% of the trees cut are used to make paper and nearly 80% is consumed in the U.S. marketplace. In the Southeast U.S., forest conversion is taking place at a rapid rate—with natural and biodiverse forests being converted to chemically managed pine plantations. In the face of these impacts, in the printing and writing sector, recycled fiber utilization still stands at less than ten percent. These factors underscore a need to do what we can to improve the environmental impacts of the paper used in religious texts and books. The message and shared value of stewardship needs to be extended to the paper it is printed on.

The Global Warming Connection

It is estimated that nearly 40% of materials found in landfills are paper products—with nearly 4 million tons of office paper landfilled or incinerated in 2004. As this paper degrades, it produces methane—a greenhouse gas with 21 times the heat trapping power of carbon dioxide. As publishers increase their use of recycled fiber, it serves to expand the market for this fiber and thereby pull it out of landfills. Using recycled fiber also serves to reduce pressure on forests—and by reducing the demand for virgin fiber, the use of recycled fiber in paper can reduce the frequency at which trees are cut and increase the total stock of carbon in forests. Recycled paper also helps maintain the stock of carbon stored in paper by reusing it multiple times.

Using the Most Ecologically Responsible Materials for Books

Recycled Fiber:

We call upon religious publishers to maximize the use of recycled fiber in book paper striving for a minimum of 30% recycled content level (majority postconsumer waste) and ideally much higher in proceeding years. It is estimated that each ton of recycled fiber that replaces a ton of virgin fiber saves the equivalent of 17-24 trees, 2,208 to 3,206 pounds of greenhouse gases and approximately 5,000 to 10,000 gallons of water—depending on the process used to make it.

Forest Stewardship Council [FSC] Certified Virgin Fiber:

We call upon religious publishers to encourage the development of FSC certified book papers and to make use of papers that are FSC certified as they become available. It is widely accepted that the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) maintains the most rigorous standards in forest management—best ensuring protections for Endangered Forests, preventing the conversion of natural forests to tree plantations, and integrating strong social criteria, among many other strengths.

Minimizing Production Impacts

In addition to using the most ecologically responsible fibers possible, we urge publishers to use papers that are Processed Chlorine Free and to print books with soy-based inks.

Doing What is Right

At some point, we must ask ourselves if we are doing all we can to take care of each other and our home. This question is a starting place that requires us to stop doing things the way they have always been done and to look within at both a personal and institutional level. As individuals and organizations, we are both readers of the books you publish and advocates who represent a growing concern for Creation and know that it is possible for steps to be taken in the right direction. Please answer the call.

Signed,

Name:

Organization:

Date:

To sign this statement online, please visit <http://www.greenpressinitiative.org/>
or send an email to erin@greenpressinitiative.org.