

HEINRICH 1386

Heinrich's Legacy | Our Responsibility



THE MAGAZINE OF THE BROTHERHOOD OF ST. CHRISTOPH

EDITION 2025

Behind the Scenes

Commitment, Heart and Professionalism

The daily work of the Brotherhood is far more than tradition and ritual.

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It's about money – money that helps where others turn away.

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AUSERWÄHLT VON DEN BESTEN





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BROTHERHOOD OF ST. CHRISTOPH

THE WORLD'S OLDEST CHARITY
FOUNDED 1386

ORGANISATIONAL OFFICE:

BROTHERHOOD OF ST. CHRISTOPH · ST. CHRISTOPH 1 · CHAPEL · A-6580 ST. ANTON AM ARLBERG
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Clarity Creates Trust

How the Brotherhood works – structures, history and responsibility for the future

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

What unites us all is the conviction that no one in need must be left alone.

For more than 600 years, the Brotherhood has carried this mission forward – from Heinrich Findelkind to us today. To ensure that this work endures, it requires not only heart and charity, but also reliable structures.

Therefore, I would like to show you openly how the Brotherhood operates and how we handle your donations responsibly. It is about forming a clear, shared picture – a foundation for trust and cohesion.

Every functioning organisation relies on clear structures: for processing donations, for accounting and legal certainty, for communication and events, for all the many small things that make the operation possible.

For a long time, these costs were not placed in the spotlight. A significant reason was that these costs were covered by the Hospiz Hotel and by my family.

In total, this corresponds to roughly **eight million euros of direct and indirect support** provided since 1961 through the Hospiz and the Werner family. The Werner family is thus the largest supporter in the Brotherhood's entire history.

This enormous contribution – which made so much possible – also explains why, externally, the impression often arose that the Brotherhood had hardly any expenses of its own.

Many may have shared that thought as a pleasant idea: the notion of a place where help simply happens, without effort.

But we all know: Reality is different. Help requires structures.

Someone must take care, organise, assume responsibility.

A decisive turning point came when the Hospiz Hotel was no longer available to the Brotherhood. With it, the Brotherhood lost its organisational anchor.

What had previously been carried naturally in the background by the hotel suddenly no longer existed. What remained was the small, cold chapel in St. Christoph – and the responsibility to look after around **12,000 members**, organise Brotherhood Sundays, and build a new foundation for the future.

For many, it became visible only then what the Brotherhood had truly been built upon for decades: on the structures of the hotel and the personal commitment of Adi and Gerda Werner.

Another point concerns **voluntary work** – a wonderful and important form of commitment.

Within the Brotherhood, however, it was always limited to a few functions – the BSC Council, the auditors, a handful of helpers. Beyond that, there were no voluntary staff at all.

The operative work was carried out as part of the hotel and sustained there.

This reveals an important truth: A Brotherhood built only on voluntary work cannot endure. But a Brotherhood built only on paid staff works just as little. It needs the right balance – both together.

If we look at how a charity organisation functions, its work can broadly be divided into three areas:



■ **The heart of the organisation: the projects.** This is where the largest share of our funds flows – direct support, educational initiatives, disaster relief.

■ **Fundraising:**

Without mailings, events, digital channels, or even this magazine, there would be no donations. It may sound like effort, but it is like sowing without which there can be no harvest.

■ **A reliable organisation:**

Accounting, legal reviews, digital systems, staff. Austria is very clear: any organisation wanting to retain donation deductibility may spend no more than around ten per cent on this organisational area.

The best comparison is **agriculture**: Whoever wants a harvest in autumn must sow in spring, cultivate the soil, water the field. Without this background work, there are no fruits in the end. The help we provide is the harvest.

But without mailings, accounting, communication and organisation there would be no donations, no planning, no reliability. What happens behind the scenes is essential so that help can unfold at the forefront.

We rely on membership fees, targeted fundraising campaigns, and earmarked donations.

We want to gain additional members and generate further income for specific aid projects through special campaigns. This keeps our Brotherhood vibrant and of ongoing interest to our brothers and sisters.

Sometimes we encounter individual destinies that touch us particularly deeply – as in the case of Johannes from the Stanzertal. With our campaign “Purzelbaum”, we were able to greatly ease the hardship this young man and his family face.

The compassion shown for this campaign was overwhelming and demon-

strated powerfully what our Brotherhood can achieve.

The principle is simple: Whatever is donated goes directly to the person or family concerned.

There is no automatic contribution from the Rapid Relief Fund (Schnellhilfefonds).

Those who donate do so consciously: “Yes, I want to help here.”

Those who do not wish to donate are equally free.

This allows us to respond flexibly: sometimes a few hundred euros, sometimes tens of thousands. But always:

Every euro goes exactly where it was promised.

The distinction is clear::

■ The **Adi and Gerda Werner Rapid Relief Fund** is filled through annual donations and ensures swift and reliable help.

■ **Special campaigns** are an additional offer to mobilise targeted support for exceptional cases.

For decades, much was taken for granted without being questioned.

Today it is important to me to explain openly how the Brotherhood works. Because clarity creates trust – and trust is the foundation on which we carry this work forward into the future.

We stand in the tradition of Heinrich Findelkind, who, as an orphaned shepherd boy living on the margins of society, still found the strength to found a work that continues to support people in need to this day.

This spirit lives on in us. And it reminds us: Only together can we carry into the future what has endured for more than 600 years.

Yours,

Florian Werner

An organisation built solely on voluntary work cannot endure. And an organisation relying exclusively on full-time staff works just as little. It needs the right balance – both together.



Fliesen, Öfen & Naturstein

Feldkircher Str. 10 | 6820 Frastanz
www.gort.at



THE ARLBERG: Where Community Has Found Its Path for Centuries

The Arlberg is more than a geographical place – it is the birthplace of a spirit that endures to this day.

Since the 14th century, hospitality, protection and community have come together here to form a tradition that radiates far beyond the mountain pass. Where travellers once sought refuge in snowstorms, people from across the world now find a culture of caring for one another – the very essence of the Brotherhood of St. Christoph.

Over the centuries, the Brotherhood has grown, endured highs and lows, and continually adapted to the challenges of its time. Throughout these changes, the Arlberg has always been the place where the idea of helping first took shape: simple, direct, and deeply human.

Today, the region counts among the strongest and most committed communities within the Brotherhood. With **over 700 active members in the Stanzertal and Klostertal**, it forms the vibrant heart of the network. These individuals carry forward the values that have held meaning at the Arlberg for generations: **solidarity, responsibility, tradition, and a view that extends beyond one's own horizon.**

This bond is evident not only in membership figures, but also in the shared understanding of what help truly means: swift, concrete, and without detours.



In recent years, the Brotherhood has been able to support countless individuals – and a significant part of this strength originates from the Arlberg itself.

At the same time, the network today has become international: the Brotherhood exists in over 40 countries, and yet the Arlberg remains its core identity. There are few regions where tradition and modernity intertwine so naturally. This special connection between heritage and progress is what makes the Brotherhood fit for the future.

The Arlberg is the place where Heinrich's idea was born. And it is the place where it is still tangible – unique in the Alps.



Wennst Wert auf Tradition legst. **Werde Tyroler!**



„Tief verwurzelt in den Tiroler Werten von Zusammenhalt, Hilfsbereitschaft und gelebter Tradition, fühlen wir uns seit Generationen dem Gemeinwohl und der Verantwortung für andere verpflichtet. Schon über mehrere Generationen unterstützen wir die Visionen und Werte der Bruderschaft St. Christoph, eine der größten sozialen Einrichtungen im Alpenraum. Auch heute noch ist es für mich und meine Familie eine soziale Verantwortung und zeitlose Verpflichtung, diese Unterstützung künftig weiterzuführen.“

Karl Christian Handl



TRUST, RESPONSIBILITY AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The operational development of the Brotherhood

Dear friends of the Brotherhood,
dear Sisters and Brothers,

The past years have been marked by profound transformation. With the establishment of the Brotherhood as a public-law corporation, the development of an independent administration, and clear organisational structures, the Brotherhood has taken an important step into the present – without losing its appreciation for the past.

During this phase, I had the privilege of taking on operational responsibility. The work has been intensive and demanding, yet deeply enriching. I have witnessed the strength of this community and how the Brotherhood today is perceived as a professional charity – both regionally and internationally.

In autumn 2026, elections for the Brotherhood Council will take place, during which a new Brotherhood Master will be chosen. The separation between representative leadership and operational management strengthens the organisation and enables growth.

I look forward to dedicating myself fully in future to the further development of the Brotherhood – in fundraising, in project work, in international

cooperation, and in the professionalisation of our processes.

My goal remains to carry Heinrich's spirit into the present: with humanity, clarity, and resolve.

My deepest thanks go especially to my parents, Gerda and Adolf Werner, who shaped the spirit of the Hospiz and the Brotherhood over decades. Their dedication forms the foundation on which we stand today.

We have achieved much – and even more lies ahead. Together, we will continue the Brotherhood as a modern, transparent, and effective organisation.

Warm regards,

Florian Werner
Managing Director of
the Brotherhood of St. Christoph

With the establishment of the Brotherhood as a public-law corporation, the development of an independent administration, and clear organisational structures, the Brotherhood has taken an important step into the present.

Follow our social-media activities.

You will find: up-to-date information and engaging podcasts, such as Henry, who recounts the rich history of the Brotherhood.



When Children Must Grow Up Too Soon

The tragedy of the Schwabenkinder – and why it has not ended even today

They are images that etch themselves into memory: barefoot children, small bundles on their backs, crossing the Arlberg. The wind howls, the cold burns their faces. What drives them is hunger – and the hope of finding work in Swabia in order to survive.

Well into the 19th century, hundreds of children from Tyrol and Vorarlberg had to make this journey each spring. They were called Schwabenkinder – “Swabian children”.

Their story is a mirror of social hardship. It tells of a time when poverty was not individual failure but a collective fate. Of families who had no other choice than to send their children away. Of children who had to grow up far too early.

But this chapter is not an isolated phenomenon of the 19th century. It stands within a much older European tradition: the trade in children – a dark chapter stretching far back into the Middle Ages.

Before the Schwabenkinder: Child Slavery in the Middle Ages

Long before children were sent across the Arlberg, they were already part of organised systems of trade and dependency. In Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, it was common in many places to sell people – including children – to pawn them, or to carry them off as spoils of war.

Poverty, debt, warfare or famine led parents to give up their children in exchange for money or protection. Ecclesiastical bans existed but were often ineffective.

In the Byzantine Empire and the Mediterranean region, slave markets flourished. Children were among the most coveted “goods” – considered malleable,



At markets in Upper Swabia they were assigned to farming families, many of them barely ten years old. They worked from sunrise until nightfall – for a few coins and a roof over their heads.

adaptable, and inexpensive. Legal texts from Constantinople explicitly mention price lists for boys and girls. Even Emperor Justinian tried in the 6th century to restrict the sale of children – in vain.

With the rise of the mercantile republics of Genoa and Venice, the trade shifted to the Black Sea. Ports such as **Caffa** or **Tana** became, between the 13th and 15th centuries, hubs of an international slave trade in which children from the Caucasus, Crimea, and Eastern Europe were sold.

Through Genoese and Venetian ships they were transported across the Mediterranean – as far as North Africa and the Near East.

Arabic sources refer to the “**Saqāliba**”

– Slavic and northern European children who, between the 9th and 11th centuries, were brought via Prague and France to Islamic Spain, *al-Andalus*. There they were used as servants, labourers, or – in the case of boys – as eunuchs. The trade in children was a lucrative business across confessional boundaries: Christians and Muslims participated alike.



Children – the weakest members of our society – are still shamelessly exploited in many parts of the world today. There may no longer be public slave markets such as those depicted in these images, yet the harsh fate of affected children has not changed.





Those who think of the markets in Ravensburg, where Tyrolean children were once “placed out”, cannot ignore that there are still places today where children lose their childhood.



Northern Europe: A Similar Trail

In Scandinavia and the Anglo-Saxon world, records exist of child sales, in which indebted families gave up their children in order to survive. During border raids, pirate attacks, and throughout the Crusades, children were abducted and sold.

With the shifting of trade routes in the 15th century and the spread of serfdom in Central Europe, the markets gradually disappeared – but the underlying idea remained: that children could become a means of survival.

From the Markets of the Middle Ages to the Markets of Poverty

Anyone familiar with the story of the Schwabenkinder recognises in it a mutated continuation of this medieval practice. The motives have remained almost unchanged: destitution, hunger, lack of opportunity – only the framework has changed. Where the Arlberg once marked the boundary between poverty and hope, it is today the borders between continents. Still, millions of children worldwide live in precarious circumstances. They work in factories, on plantations, in quarries; they live on the streets of megacities, without protection and without schooling.

Even in Europe, child poverty has taken on new forms – subtler, more concealed, but no less distressing. It appears in overcrowded flats, in the absence of educational opportunity, in broken biographies. Poverty today has different shapes but the same causes. And it is incomprehensible – indeed shameful – that humanity has learned so little across these centuries. We are in the 21st century, and yet we are unable to ensure that every child grows up nour-



ished, safe, and sheltered. That children are still forced today to work, flee, or fight is evidence of our collective refusal to learn – perhaps the bitterest reminder that progress does not automatically equal humanity.

Education as a Bridge

What allows children to escape hardship was – and is – education. Even the Schwabenkinder once hoped that one day they might learn to read, to write, to master a craft. Today this principle applies worldwide: Only those with access to education can break free from dependency.

In many countries, schools, vocational centres and safe spaces are emerging that give children a chance for the future. They are sustained by people who believe in what all children share – the ability to change their fate when given the chance.

Austria too provides examples that the past has taught us something.

The **initiative Sindbad**, for instance, accompanies young people who have slipped through the social safety net,

guiding them on their path to training and work. Experienced mentors support young people whose starting conditions are difficult – much as one would wish the Schwabenkinder once had someone at their side. Such programmes show that humanity is not a relic of the past but something lived anew every day.

Remembering as Responsibility

The story of the Schwabenkinder reminds us that humanity has never been a given. It teaches us that need and inequality do not stop at borders, and that solidarity begins the moment someone chooses to look.

Those who think of the markets in Ravensburg, where Tyrolean children were once “placed out”, cannot ignore that there are still places today where children lose their childhood – on other continents, under different circumstances, but for the same reasons.

History does not repeat itself exactly. But it rhymes.

From Byzantine slave markets to the Schwabenkinder of the Arlberg runs a line through the centuries – a line of poverty, exploitation, but also of endurance. It teaches us that a child’s worth must never lie in labour or possession, but in their dignity.

For every child who may learn, laugh and dream is a victory over history.

The story of “our” Schwabenkinder is not over. It begins anew every time a child has no childhood.

INVITATION

to the **641st BROTHERHOOD SUNDAY**
10–12 JULY 2026



Photo: Geierwally Open-Air Stage

All
information on
the Brotherhood
Weekend can
be found on
page 29

*Dear friends, dear members,
and all who are interested,*

*This year, **Brotherhood Sunday** is dedicated to the
theme “**Schwabenkinder**.” For this occasion,
we have prepared a highly engaging programme that
offers fascinating insights into the history of the
“Schwabenkinder” at the Arlberg.*

*From Friday, 10 July, to Sunday, 12 July, we will walk
along original historic paths and visit the Geierwally
open-air stage in Elbigenalp.*

*Information about the full programme can be found at
the end of this brochure on page 29.*

*We look forward to your participation and to seeing
you again!*

**BROTHERHOOD
SUNDAY** JULY 12
2026

**We kindly ask you to
reserve your participation:
E-mail: info@bruderschaft-st-christoph.org**



Behind the Scenes of the Brotherhood – Commitment, Heart and Professionalism

Anyone who has experienced the Brotherhood of St. Christoph knows the festive moments: the induction ceremonies at the Arlberg, the solemn certificates, charity evenings, or Brotherhood Sunday.

But few know what happens behind the scenes.

The truth is: the daily work of the Brotherhood is far more than tradition and ceremony. It is organisation, responsibility, legal precision, human closeness, and professional NGO work.

Behind every letter, every donation, every act of support, stand people whose heart and discipline ensure that the centuries-old promise remains alive:

No one is left behind in the snow.

The Control Centre – The Managing Director

Florian Werner, as Managing Director, carries the overall operational responsibility. His role is control centre, driving force, and guardian of the Brotherhood's identity.

Fundraising – The Lifeline

At a time when public budgets are being reduced, NGOs such as the Brotherhood must step in. This is why fundraising is the lifeline of the Brotherhood: it means actively and strategically securing donations, grants, and support to enable important projects and aid measures. The more resources, the more help – as simple and as demanding as that.

Tasks

- **Strategic:** defining multi-year goals, setting priorities, measuring impact.
- **Financial:** preparing budgets, reviewing quarterly reports, approving annual financial statements.
- **Legal:** ensuring that both the public-law corporation and the GmbH operate in accordance with all legal requirements – from donation reporting under §4a EStG to GDPR and BAO.
- **Representative:** engaging with major donors, appearing at charity events, maintaining presence at ecclesiastical and cultural occasions.

The Heart – Allocation of Support

Petra Nohl is responsible for the core mission: helping people in need.

Daily reality and emotional burden

Every day she encounters the suffering of others: a young mother suddenly alone after an accident; a 19-year-old whose apprenticeship collapses due to family hardship; a family who loses their home in a fire. Petra reads applications, requests missing documents, speaks with social workers, relatives, doctors. She must listen with compassion yet maintain the professional distance needed to make fair decisions. **Her work is emotionally extremely demanding.** Being confronted daily with hardship and hope requires resilience and mental strength. She carries the stories with her, yet knows: Her decisions must be documented, justifiable, and reviewable – for the sake of those seeking help and for the donors.

Responsibilities

- **Legal:** complete documentation, secure archiving, four-eyes principle for all payments.
- **Human:** showing empathy, providing hope, but also saying “no” when criteria are not met.
- **Organisational:** processing urgent cases within five days and standard cases within twenty days – among hundreds of applications each year.



The Backbone – Finance & Donation Administration

Without finances, nothing works.

Evelin Burger ensures that every donation is booked correctly and reported in accordance with the law.

A typical morning

Evelin downloads bank statements and reconciles them with the CRM system. A major donation for flood relief, several annual donations, SEPA direct debits. Each individual entry is checked and documented. She then prepares transfers for approved support cases and reviews outstanding invoices. Once a year, she reports all donations to the tax authorities – a highly sensitive task requiring absolute accuracy.

Responsibilities

- **Legal:** donation reporting, VAT submissions, annual statements – all error-free and on time.
- **Financial:** budget control, payment oversight, the four-eyes principle.
- **Organisational:** documentation for external audits, reminders, incoming mail, audit preparations.

The Face – Members, Organisation, Representation

Ursula Werner is the versatile supporting pillar of the Brotherhood. She maintains member relations, organises, represents – and steps in wherever needed.

A day with Ursula

- ◆ Morning: She prepares certificates for jubilees, sends birthday greetings, and updates member records.
- ◆ Midday: She processes orders from the online shop, issues invoices, and coordinates shipment.
- ◆ Afternoon: Together with Florian, she prepares invitations for an upcoming charity event.
- ◆ Evening: She welcomes guests at a reception, speaks with brothers and sisters, ensures appreciation and closeness.

Responsibilities

- **Membership:** around 12,000 members require care – every address correct, every letter delivered.
- **Organisation:** mailings, jubilees, events, guest lists.
- **Support:** assisting the Managing Director with minutes, trips, meetings.
- **Representation:** hosting duties, representing the Werner family, presence at official occasions.

Legal and Ethical Dimension

The Brotherhood is a community of values – but it also has legal obligations:

- **Legal forms:** public-law corporation and GmbH – including all requirements under corporate law, BAO, UGB, etc.
- **Donation law:** deductibility depends on error-free reporting.
- **Governance:** the Council and President determine strategic direction; the Managing Director implements it operationally.
- **Data protection:** member data and support cases must comply with GDPR.
- **Transparency:** annual reports, audits, and external reviews are obligatory – and a sign of respect toward donors.

Conclusion

The work of the Brotherhood is demanding, responsible, and profoundly human. Especially in times when public funding is cut, it is private and church-based NGOs that must take on more. The Brotherhood is prepared – with structure, heart, and people who accomplish far more than can be seen from the outside.

And thus, since 1386, one promise has remained alive:

No one will be left behind in the snow.



Gemeinsam etwas bewirken.

***Als** familiengeführtes Unternehmen in der dritten Generation sehen wir uns einem starken sozialen und gesellschaftlichen Engagement verpflichtet. Die Unterstützung und Förderung gemeinnütziger Institutionen – vor allem in unserer Region, aber auch darüber hinaus – sind uns ein Herzensanliegen. Wir sind stolz, Teil der Bruderschaft St. Christoph zu sein, und freuen uns auf viele gemeinsame Aktionen und Taten. Für die erste Ausgabe der Zeitschrift „Heinrich“ wünschen wir Euch viele Leserinnen und Leser sowie zahlreiche positive Reaktionen.*



Neben vielen anderen Förderprojekten unterstützen wir mit großem Engagement seit Jahren die Fußballjugend in unserer gesamten Region.

wawi-group.de





The Brotherhood of St. Christoph – Who We Are

The Brotherhood of St. Christoph is a community, founded in 1386 and recognised by the Church, of people committed to the Christian mandate of charity. In the spirit of Heinrich Findelkind, it supports individuals in need – today just as it did centuries ago. The Brotherhood acts in close connection with the dioceses of Innsbruck and Feldkirch.

Our Mission

The Brotherhood helps people who have fallen into difficult life circumstances through no fault of their own – particularly families, children, and young people in the Arlberg region. For us, help is not only financial support, but also empowerment, education, social integration, and strengthening personal responsibility.

Our Values

- Faith – Hope – Charity
- Responsibility towards people in need
- Transparency in the use of donations
- Openness, community, and intergenerational connectedness
- Support for young people through the “Brotherhood Next Generation”

How We Help

- The Brotherhood provides support for:
- individuals and families in financial hardship
 - social institutions and charitable projects
 - disaster and development aid, provided there is a thematic or regional link

Support is granted quickly, unbureaucratically, and responsibly. Larger projects are decided by the Brotherhood Council.

Financing

The Brotherhood is funded through:

- admission fees and annual contributions
- voluntary donations
- partnerships with companies
- legacies and testamentary gifts

We commit ourselves to 100% transparency and to sound financial management.

Membership

Anyone who supports the goals of the Brotherhood may become a member. Admission takes place in a solemn ceremony – either at the Arlberg or at gatherings of the community. Members are invited to take an active role in the life of the Brotherhood and to wear its emblem.

Our Symbol

The historical Brotherhood crest shows:

- the white lamb (Brixen)
- the golden cross (Constance)
- three red crosses for Faith – Hope – Charity

It may be used exclusively for the purposes and duties of the Brotherhood.



Roles and Functions in the Brotherhood of St. Christoph

The **President** of the Brotherhood of St. Christoph holds the highest honorary office and represents the Brotherhood internally and externally. He chairs the Brotherhood Council, admits new members, and ensures the conscious continuation of the Brotherhood's spiritual, cultural, and charitable tradition.

The **Brotherhood Council** is the highest decision-making body. It defines the Brotherhood's direction, decides on major support cases, and safeguards transparency and adherence to the statutes.

The **Brotherhood Master** supports the President in all operational and organisational tasks. He coordinates invitations, mailings, ceremonies, and prepares the Brotherhood's central events together with the Council.

The **Managing Director of the Brotherhood St. Christoph GmbH** holds operational responsibility for all ongoing tasks of the modern Brotherhood: financial administration, project coordination, donation management, transparency, member relations, and implementing the strategic directives set by the Council.

The **Board** implements the decisions of the Council and is responsible for financial management and the allocation of support. Its responsibilities include the annual budget, activity report, and financial statement.

The **Spiritual Assistant** forms the ecclesiastical bridge between the Diocese of Innsbruck and the Brotherhood. He shapes the spiritual framework, provides pastoral guidance, tends the Brotherhood chapel, and is responsible for the liturgical design of Brotherhood Day.

The **Expositurleiter** ensures the connection to the Diocese of Feldkirch and supports the President, the Brotherhood Master, and the Spiritual Assistant in all ecclesiastical and communal matters.

Brotherhood Council (as of 11/2025):

President Bishop Dr. Benno Elbs, Feldkirch
Prof. Dr. Reinhard Haller, Feldkirch
Gebhard Jochum, Zürs
Mayor Helmut Mall, St. Anton
Mag. Jodok Müller, Thüringen
Ludwig Muxel, Lech
Johannes Pfefferkorn, Lech
Mag. Karlheinz Rüdissler, Lauterach
Dr. Greti Schmid, Göfis
Franz Tschol, St. Anton

Board (as of 11/2025):

Thomas Brändle, Stuben
Maria Kössler, St. Anton
Mag. Stefan Schneider, St. Anton
Dietmar Tschohl, Klösterle
Florian Werner, Bad Waltersdorf



Eyewitness Account

Three siblings, one legacy – and a nephew who carries it forward

Friends and readers of our magazine,

The Brotherhood of St. Christoph has been upheld across the centuries by many people – rarely by families, and almost never across generations. Its continuity has always been a collective task.

In more recent history, the Ganahl family holds a special place. The three surviving children of Arnold and Marianne Ganahl – **Christl Hatheyer** (No. 73), **Rudolf Ganahl** (No. 6), and **Gerda Werner** (No. 9) – experienced the revival of the Brotherhood in the 1960s at close hand. Their father Arnold was among those who, in 1961, gave the Brotherhood new life at the Arlberg.

From 1964 onwards, Gerda and her husband Adolf Werner (No. 127) shaped the Hospiz and the Brotherhood for many decades. Their spirit – open, clear, warm – formed the atmosphere of this place.

The Ganahl siblings know: The Brotherhood is not a family inheritance. It has always been carried and passed on by many hands. That is what makes it strong.

Today, it fills them with joy that the Brotherhood now rests on broader shoulders – modern, clearly structured, supported by people from different regions and generations.

And they look with trust to the fact that their nephew and son, **Florian Werner**, a grandson of Arnold Ganahl, today holds operational responsibility – not as a representative of a family, but as part of a strong community.

It is a beautiful picture:

The generation that initiated the revival.
The generation that rebuilt the work.
And a new generation that develops the Brotherhood further –
professional, modern,
and in the spirit of Heinrich.



A Life's Work and Letting Go

**Our years with the Brotherhood – gratitude,
a lifetime achievement, and confidence in the future**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
dear friends of the Brotherhood,

In 1964, we – young and full of respect for the task – took over the Arlberg Hospiz. With the Hospiz came the Brotherhood of St. Christoph into our care. We could not have imagined how profoundly both would shape our lives for decades to come.

For us, the Brotherhood was always more than an association. It was the heart and soul of the Hospiz, an expression of a long tradition of help at the Arlberg, and a community of people who stand by one another. Much of what we carried out took place quietly in the background. For us, it was self-evident to shoulder it. Today, we see that this very self-evidence made the Brotherhood strong.

We look back on eventful years: joys, crises, new beginnings. We learned that the Brotherhood is not only a legacy, but a mission – a mission not to leave people in need alone.

Our gratitude goes to all who accompanied us – in the Council, the Board, the membership, as friends and partners. Without you, the Brotherhood would not be what it is today.

Letting go is not always easy. But at 90 years old (Adolf) and 85 (Gerda), we feel: One can – and must – learn to let go.

It is good to know that the Brotherhood today is in good hands.

A special sign of gratitude for us was the award of the **Heinrich Findelkind Prize for Lifetime Achievement** last year – for the first time in the more than 640-year history of the Brotherhood. This honour touched us deeply and is dedicated not only to us but to all who stood by our side throughout the decades.

We wish the Brotherhood all the best for the future – and we are grateful that we were able to be part of this story for so many years.

With warm greetings,

Adolf and Gerda Werner



What We Achieved Together in 2024

The Brotherhood of St. Christoph – A Look Behind the Numbers

2024 was a year of intense support, strong community, and major responsibility.

Thanks to our members and numerous donors, we were able to provide **more than one million euros** to people in need.

This trust obliges us – and that is why we set out openly where our funds come from and how we use them.

Where does the money come from? – Our Sources of Funding

In 2024, the Brotherhood had a total of **€1,111,123** at its disposal.

The largest share comes from the community of our members and supporters:

- **€1,084,598 in donations**
- **€7,400 in public grants**
- **€19,125 from asset management**

How do we use the money? – Our Expenditure

In 2024, the Brotherhood used a total of **€1,325,536**. The fact that this amount exceeds the annual income has a clear reason: For support cases already approved, earmarked reserves had been established which will only be paid out in 2025. This ensures that the Brotherhood remains a reliable partner for people in acute need – even beyond the calendar year.

1 Aid and Statutory Purpose: **€975,381**

Direct emergency assistance, casework, projects, community and chapel, staff and material costs. **76% of all funds flow directly into aid and the statutory mission.**

2 Fundraising and Member Services: **€200,670**

The Brotherhood's structure is unique: Alongside classic fundraising, **there is a distinct cost component for member services**, which many other charities do not have in this form. For decades, every new member has received a special welcome box – a deliberately cultivated tradition of the Brotherhood.

It includes, among other items:

- high-quality printed materials
- Brotherhood pins
- keyring
- further traditional materials for admission into the community

This tradition fosters connection, appreciation, and identity. Fundraising and member services also include:

- donor and member communication
- postage and mailings
- events
- staff costs for fundraising and member service

Despite these special efforts, the following still holds:

Every euro invested returns €5.40 in donations.

A well-above-average result.

3 Administration: **€115,910**

Accounting, tax consultancy, organisation, IT, rent, payroll – in short: everything necessary to ensure that help is delivered securely, fairly and transparently.

Administrative costs amount to **9%** – and are **already included within the overhead.**

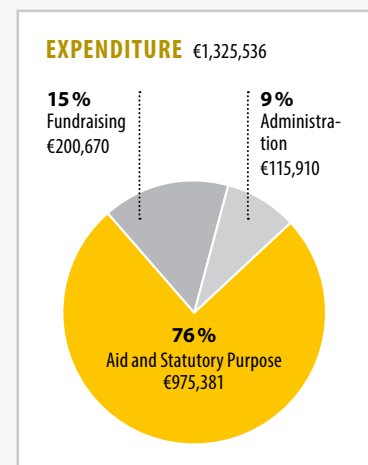
4 Other Expenditure: **€33,375**

Depreciation and general operating expenses.

5 Earmarked Reserves: **€320,330**

These funds are set aside for support cases already approved but to be paid out later.

→ **Total Expenditure: € 1,325,536**



What remains in the end?

- **76%** of our funds flow directly into aid.
- **24%** ensure fundraising, member services and administration – and thus the organisation’s functionality.
- A **1 : 5.4** fundraising efficiency ratio is an extraordinarily strong value.

Above all, one thing holds true:

Without the loyalty and generosity of our members, donors and supporters, none of this would be possible.

The Brotherhood of St. Christoph says: **Thank you for a strong year 2024 – and for ensuring that a centuries-old tradition continues to provide living help today.**

How do we compare to other organisations?

Many donors ask: **“Is 76% spent directly on aid a good value?”**

The internationally recognised benchmark compares **programme expenditure (direct aid) versus overhead (fundraising + administration)** – the same key figure used by the Brotherhood.

International standards (directly comparable)

- A programme expenditure of **at least 65%** is considered solid.
- **From 70%**, an organisation is rated very efficient.
- Overhead (fundraising + administration) should remain **below 30%**.

Where does the Brotherhood stand?

- **76% programme expenditure**
- **24% overhead in total**,
consisting of: **9% administration** and **15% fundraising and member services**

Interpretation

- The Brotherhood is **well above** the 70% “very good” mark.
- Overhead is **clearly below** the 30% threshold.
- Administrative costs of **9%** are **exceptionally low** – particularly for an organisation with a historically grown member base.

Thus, the Brotherhood of St. Christoph fulfils recognised NGO standards to a high degree and operates efficiently, responsibly and transparently.

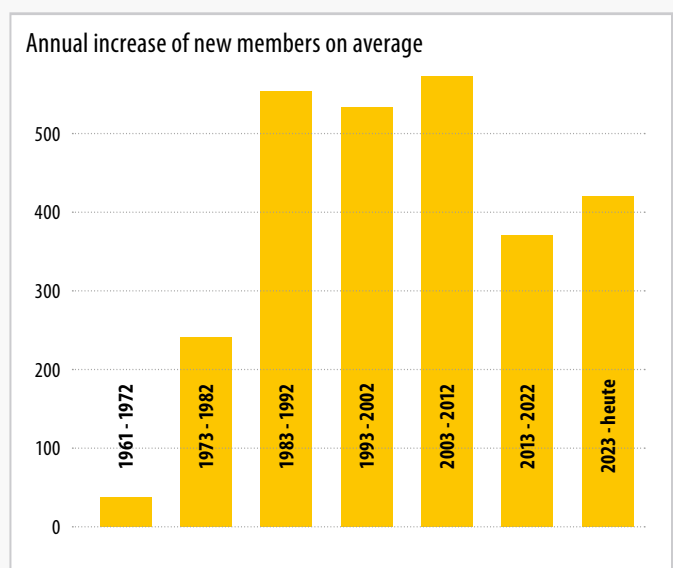
Membership Development – Status 2025

Since the Brotherhood’s founding in 1386, approximately 30,000 brothers and sisters have been admitted – around 24,000 of these in the past six decades alone.

In 2025, we completed a full update of our membership and address records. Members who were no longer reachable or who did not respond despite reminders were removed from the database. For the first time, our statistics therefore reflect the actual active membership count.

As of 20 October 2025, the Brotherhood has **around 12,000 active members**.

Particularly encouraging: **From 2023 to 2025, we recorded an annual increase of more than 420 new members on average** – a clear sign of the Brotherhood’s continuing strength and appeal.



Beyond Lifetime – Part of the Oldest Charity of All Time

A Legacy That Endures.

On 28 March 2025, a new chapter in the history of the Brotherhood of St. Christoph was opened at the traditional Hotel Lorünser in Zürs: the ceremonial introduction of the Beyond Lifetime Membership (BLT).

It was a quiet, dignified moment – and at the same time a historic one. Already on this evening, six Beyond Lifetime Memberships were confirmed – a powerful sign of trust, gratitude, and hope.

This new form of membership is a commitment to the values that have shaped the Brotherhood for centuries: charity, togetherness, and responsibility that extends beyond one's own lifetime.

Why Beyond Lifetime?

Because commitment can have an impact far beyond one's own life.

Because responsibility does not end when one is no longer here.

Because traces remain – in what is good, helpful, and human.

And because the oldest charity on the Arlberg honours those who feel connected across generations.

Beyond Lifetime is not an ordinary membership, but a promise:

"I help, even when I am no longer here."

The Beyond Lifetime Fund

Each Beyond Lifetime Membership is linked to a one-off contribution that flows into the **Beyond Lifetime Fund (BLT Fund)**. The capital remains intact – only the generated returns are used.

These flow into the **Gerda and Adi Werner Rapid Relief Fund** of the Brotherhood of St. Christoph and enable swift, unbureaucratic support for people in need – nationally and internationally, with a particular focus on development cooperation, education, and humanitarian assistance.

The BLT Fund is placed under the honorary supervision of up to three representatives from among the Beyond Lifetime Members. In this way, **lived transparency and shared responsibility** arise within the community – across generations.

Signs of Belonging

Every Beyond Lifetime Member is entered into the **Brotherhood's eternal register** and named permanently in the Brotherhood's publications – and, if desired, also at events.

A special symbol is the **BLT pin**:

a fine, custom-made piece of metalwork reserved exclusively for Beyond Lifetime Members.

It stands for loyalty, hope, and the idea that help knows no time.



Who Can Become a Beyond Lifetime Member?

- **Individual:** € 7,500
- **Couple:** € 10,000
- **Family with one child:** € 15,000
- **Family (up to two children):** € 20,000
- **Each additional child (under 18 years):** € 5,000

With this contribution, one becomes a **permanent part of the oldest charitable community in Europe** – and helps continue writing its history.

A Legacy of Hope

Beyond Lifetime is for those who wish to be more than members.

For those who want to be part of something greater.

For those who act with hope – and connect through love.

Together, we are writing history – today and for all time.

"The Beyond Lifetime Membership is a promise to the future – that help never ends as long as there are people who believe in it."

Florian Werner



PURZELBAUM – Falling Backwards, Living Forwards

A single moment changed everything: Since his serious fall in July 2023, Johannes from the Tyrolean Oberland has been severely and permanently paralysed. His family has been struggling every day since – physically, financially, and organisationally.

Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our community, **€160,000** have already been raised. This has enabled the purchase of an accessible vehicle, essential medication, assistive equipment, and initial barrier-free adaptations.

But the road ahead is long. The necessary remodelling of his home in Stengen – a place first mentioned in the 1774 *Atlas Tyrolensis* as “Gstreng” – is technically demanding and costs well over **€200,000**. The steep slope, narrow access, and limited space make every construction measure a challenge.

That is why Johannes needs our support – now more than ever.

Donate now:

Please refer to the attached payment slip in the accompanying letter or donate via this link:

<https://bruderschaft-st-christoph.org/weihnachtsaktion-purzelbaum>



IBAN: AT52 3624 8000 0081 2107
Reference: Purzelbaum



Every euro brings Johannes closer to his goal: true accessibility and new hope.

Every contribution helps fund further adaptations, care, assistive technology, and rehabilitation.

“The Brotherhood’s help gives me momentum. It shows me that I am not alone on this new path.” Johannes

Please help restore safety and dignity to his daily life.

1386 – 1901 – Today: How St. Christoph Shaped the Arlberg

1386 – The Brotherhood of a Foundling

St. Christoph am Arlberg is a small place where history has been written more than once. The beginning came in 1386 with a foundling. Heinrich, a young shepherd who grew up as an orphan on the margins of society, founded the Brotherhood of St. Christoph here.

His aim was simple and yet immense: to offer travellers protection and help on the snow-covered pass. He collected donations, built the hospice, and promised never to leave anyone behind in the snow. From the hands of a child who had little himself arose a work of charity that has endured for centuries and lives on to this day.



1901 – The Birth of a Community in the Snow

More than five centuries later, on 3 January 1901, the same walls witnessed history again. Outside the winter raged, inside the fire-place glowed. Six skiers sat together in the Hospiz St. Christoph,

sharing wine, making music – and deciding to found a ski club.

Councillor Adolf Rybizka found the words that were written into the guest book and today remain the founding statement:

“Enchanted by nature, inspired by sport, convinced of the necessity of creating at the Arlberg a modest meeting point for the friends of this noble pleasure...”

Thus the Ski-Club Arlberg was born. What emerged that evening was more than an association – it was a community, fuelled by joy, passion, and courage.

Within a few years, the SCA would transform life in the valley, attract guests from around the world, and turn the Arlberg into the cradle of alpine skiing.

From Poorhouse to Beacon of Hope

Around 1900, the Stanzertal was bitterly poor. Many children had to walk barefoot into the unknown each spring as *Schwabenkinder*, working as herders or maids to secure their families' survival. But with the opening of the Arlberg railway in 1884 came guests – and with them a new hope: skiing.

The young Ski-Club Arlberg organised ski courses, hosted races, and brought locals and visitors together. Within decades, a poor mountain valley became a winter paradise.

Pioneering Spirit and Global Standing

Already in 1904, the SCA organised the first major race in the Alps, with a glacier start and



valley finish. With Hannes Schneider, the Arlberg became the birthplace of alpine ski technique. His “Arlberg Technique” made skiing accessible for everyone. Films such as *Der weiße Rausch* (1931) carried the name of the Arlberg across the world. Kings and artists travelled to the valley. With the Arlberg-Kandahar race of 1928, the combination of downhill and slalom was evaluated for the first time – the birth of modern alpine skiing.



After 1945 – The Federal Sports School as Classroom of the World

The third great chapter of St. Christoph began after the Second World War.

At the Federal Sports School, directly next to the Hospiz, the Arlberg became the “university of skiing”. Men such as Stefan Kruckenhauser and Franz Hoppichler – the ski popes of their time – shaped generations of ski instructors. Through films, books, and teaching methods they spread their knowledge across all skiing nations of the world.

And once again, the spirit of 1386 connected with the sport: it was Kruckenhauser who, together with Arnold Ganahl, re-established the Brotherhood of St. Christoph in 1961. Here, the lines of protection, sport, and education converged – and the Arlberg became a symbol of community and renewal.

Three Lines, One Place

Thus, the same place wrote history three times:

- ♦ 1386 – the Brotherhood of a founding, born of charity.
- ♦ 1901 – the Ski-Club Arlberg, born of passion.
- ♦ Post-1945 – the Federal Sports School, born of knowledge and teaching – today continued in the Ski Academy of the Austrian Ski Federation (ÖSV) in St. Christoph.

Two of these institutions – the Brotherhood and the Ski Academy – remain based in St. Christoph today. The Ski-Club Arlberg, by contrast, is spread across the entire region, with local sections in St. Anton, Lech, Zürs and Stuben. Together they shape the identity of a region that resonates far beyond its borders.

The SCA Today – Family, World Club, and Talent Forge

Today, the Ski-Club Arlberg is one of the world’s largest and most renowned ski clubs. Over 9,000 members from more than 60 nations wear the badge of the crossed skis.

Regular gatherings in St. Anton, Lech, Zürs and Stuben are as much a part of the club as meetings in cities such as Stuttgart, Vienna, or New York. The club is both home and network.

The heart of its work is youth development. Around 200 children and young people train year-round in all disciplines – from alpine racing to freeride to cross-country skiing. They learn not only technique but also values: discipline, respect, team spirit, and responsibility in the mountains.

Many great names of ski sport – from Trude Jochum-Beiser to Karl Schranz to Mario Matt and Nina Ortlieb – made their first turns here. The SCA sees itself as a talent forge with heart – a club that shapes young people and creates opportunity.

Shared Members – Shared Belonging

To this day, many people are members of both the Ski-Club Arlberg and the Brotherhood of St. Christoph.

They wear the club badge and the Brotherhood pin.

This dual affiliation is unique and shows how closely both communities are interwoven.

Sport and solidarity, joy and responsibility – at the Arlberg, both belong together inseparably.



A German society magazine once summarised it with a wink: “You recognise a true Arlberg guest by the fact that they wear the SCA badge, the BSC pin – and ski in Strolz boots.”

A playful remark, yet also a sign of how strongly both institutions shape the Arlberg to this day.

Unique at the Arlberg

The Arlberg is more than a mountain pass. It is a place where communities have emerged again and again – communities whose influence reached far beyond the mountains. Protection, sport, and education – three chapters of a story that has brought people together for centuries.



A Literary Closing Word by Heinrich Findelkind

In the Year of Our Lord 1386, I was nothing but a boy, a foundling, poor and abandoned on the heights of the Arlberg. My days were marked by hunger and cold, my nights by loneliness. But one day, in a snowstorm, I heard the cry for help of a traveller who lay close to death in the snow. I took him by the hand and, weak as I was, dragged him step by step into a makeshift shelter. He survived – and in that hour I knew: my life has a purpose. No one shall be left behind in the snow.

But how could a mere boy build a house? I had nothing but my voice and the courage to ask.

So I went from farm to farm, from village to village. I did not ask only for bread, but above all for guilders, for coins. For I knew: only with money could one build walls, create warmth and secure help. Some gave little, some more – but together it was enough.

Thus the Hospiz of St. Christoph came into being. From a wretched beginning grew a place of charity. From my promise grew a brotherhood.

Many centuries have passed, and I see: the Brotherhood has survived countless highs and lows. It has stood in times of peace and in times of war. It endured plague and hunger, saw kings and emperors come and go. Even when the Habsburgs, in the nineteenth century, sought to silence it, the fire did not go out. It smouldered on in hearts and memories until Arnold Ganahl kindled it anew.

It was he who brought the Brotherhood out of the shadows back into the light – a new beginning after centuries.

Today I look upon your community. It has grown large, far beyond anything I could ever have dreamt. I see the members – thousands of you who, with your contributions, your donations and your loyalty, carry the Brotherhood. Every euro, every donation is like the guilder I once begged for: small in itself, great in its entirety. I see your President, who guides you spiritually, blesses you and reminds you that your work is not only a human duty, but also a divine calling. I see the Brotherhood Council, which keeps watch, examines, and points you in the right direction. I see the Board, which bears responsibility, takes decisions, supervises and steers.

And I see the quiet helpers in the background – those doers whom scarcely anyone sees, and without whom nothing would function. People who check figures, administer donations, write letters, review support cases, prepare events, keep minutes, document decisions. They bear the Brotherhood like invisible pillars – silent, yet unshakeable.

*I also look back upon more recent times, upon **Adi and Gerda Werner**, who renewed, nurtured and preserved the Hospiz and the Brotherhood over decades. Adi – the visionary, the host, who led the Brotherhood into a new era.*

Gerda – the quieter, stronger force, who gave heart and warmth, wove networks, won people.

Together they kept the work alive when others would long since have given up. Their achievement was immense – and stands in the same line as my promise of old.

Your path today is no easier than mine. I wrestled with storm and snow, you wrestle with laws, financial plans, duties of accountability. I collected guilders in pouches, you collect donations in bank accounts. Yet do not be mistaken: order, too, is an act of charity. Bookkeeping, too, is justice. Transparency, too, is mercy.

Therefore I say to you: never forget that behind every number there is a human being; behind every set of minutes a life story; behind every donation an act of love. The Brotherhood was never merely a house of stone. It has always been a promise, carried by people who gave, examined, built, led – by quiet helpers in the background who kept the work alive.

Thus my work lives on. It has survived plague and wars, bans and threats; even the Habsburgs could not extinguish it. It lives because people live it. It lives because heart and duty come together. It lives because you carry it forward.

And for as long as you keep this promise, the Brotherhood of St. Christoph will remain a light in the snow – yesterday, today, and in all the times that are yet to come.

BROTHERHOOD WEEKEND 2026

FRIDAY 10 JULY – SUNDAY 12 JULY 2026

Photo: Geierwally Open-Air Stage - Arnold Weißenbach

Be there
and be part
of this vibrant
tradition!

Friday, 10 July 2026 Cultural Evening

Visit to the Schwabenkinder performance at the Geierwally Open-Air Theatre in Elbigenalp

Maximum number of participants: 30

On Friday evening we will visit the open-air stage in Elbigenalp, where the play *“Die Schwabenkinder”* by Claudia Lang-Forcher, directed by Roland Silbernagl, tells a moving chapter of Tyrolean history. At the centre of the story are the children from the Lech Valley and Tyrol, who – during times of great poverty – were sent to Swabia each spring to secure the survival of their families through hard labour.

For the Brotherhood of St. Christoph, this evening holds special significance. The **Plärerkapelle** at the Arlberg Pass, our Brotherhood Chapel, was for centuries the place where the Schwabenkinder from the Stanzertal said farewell to their families. In tears, they set out on their uncertain journey into the unknown – hence the name *Plärerkapelle*. Together with the Hospiz, the chapel served as a refuge offering protection and strength to travellers and those in need.

The visit to this performance therefore forms a bridge between past and present: We remember the suffering and hardship of earlier generations, while continuing the Brotherhood’s mission to stand by people in need, to offer hope, and to live community.

(Note: The performances take place in all weather conditions; the venue is covered. Warm clothing or a blanket is recommended.)

Individual arrival – provisional programme

- 15:30 Uhr Meeting point: Hotel Schwarzer Adler, St. Anton
- 16:00 Uhr Punctual departure to Elbigenalp with Arlberg Express. During the journey, Brother Florian will speak about the connection between the Schwabenkinder and the Brotherhood. Travel time approx. 70 minutes.
- 17:30 Uhr Guided tour with Bernhard Wolf – Geierwally Stage (30 minutes)
- 18:00 Uhr Visit to the Wunderkammer
- 18:45 Uhr Joint dinner at the restaurant Zur Geierwally
- 20:15 Uhr Seating in the Adler Loge with aperitif
- 20:30 Uhr Performance
- 23:00 Uhr Return journey

Saturday, 11 July 2026 Nature Day · Relaxation Day · Hiking Day

The programme for Saturday is still being prepared.

Sunday, 12 July 2026 Brotherhood Sunday

- 10:00 Uhr Admission
- 10:25 Uhr Entrance of the Rifle Company and the Traditional Costume Band
- 10:30 Uhr Holy Mass
- 12:30 Uhr Joint lunch at the Arlberg Well.Com Centre
- 14:30 Uhr Ceremonial inductions into the Brotherhood
- 16:00 Uhr Official end

We look forward to many of you joining us.



We kindly request
registration for participation:

E-mail: info@bruderschaft-st-christoph.org

FALKE

130 Years Anniversary

**"This is not a sock -
this is FALKE"**

Actor Matthias Schweighöfer & his mother Gitta Schweighöfer

from
GENERATION
GENERATION
to

