

# Our Mission

Theological Basis  
of our Christian Identity



Who are we?  
What is our goal?  
How do we see  
our mandate?

## Preface

The intention of this document is to communicate our understanding of the identity of CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission e.V. and its work as a Christian organisation in generally understandable terms and to provide it with a theological basis.

This does not involve the forms of expression and convictions of individual faith, but is much more a mutual understanding of the Christian basis of CBM's work within Christianity and beyond. In its identity, CBM sees itself as an ecumenically focussed, internationally operating, independent Christian organisation which is not linked to the specific confession of any Christian faith community, church or denomination.

Even though the members of the CBM association see themselves as committed to the mandate given by Jesus as described here (see CBM's Articles, §2,1, Para. 2), CBM's specific concept of its mission is

communicated and explained to CBM's co-workers. Both CBM's members and its co-workers are expected at least to concur with CBM's Christian values and to affirm the vision and mission statement described here (see below) as the mandatory yardstick for CBM's work.

**The document was adopted and approved by the General Assembly of CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission e.V., which is responsible for matters of principle in accordance with §13 para. 2a of the Association's Articles of Association, on September 11, 2021.**



*Rainer Brockhaus*

Dr. Rainer Brockhaus  
CEO



*Peter Schießl*

Dr. Peter Schießl  
CEO

# Development of CBM

“The deed of love is the sermon everyone understands.” To this very day, CBM has remained committed to this approach.



Instead, he saw his mandate to follow the example of Jesus who, in his helping and healing acts, focussed particularly on people with disabilities (“the blind, the lame, the deaf-mute, the lepers and those possessed by evil spirits”) and prepared the ground for re-integration into their social community. Christoffel saw this mandate as his mission. Like the Apostle Paul, he gave topmost priority to compassionate love, above hope and personal faith (1 Corinthians 13.13). As someone who, in his life, been deeply touched by the experience of God’s love, Christoffel wanted to follow Christ’s example and charge to his disciples (Matthew 10.7-8a). Through love in action, he wished to give an example of the love of God which was both convincing and inviting in its manifestation. He acted in line with his personal maxim: “The deed of love is the sermon everyone understands.” To this very day, CBM has remained committed to this approach.

In 1908, Pastor Ernst Jakob Christoffel, born 1876 in Rheydt, Rhineland, Germany, founded the Bethesda Home for blind, deaf and other severely disabled people and orphans in the eastern Anatolian city of Malatya in present-day Turkey. This is how CBM’s predecessor organisation, the „Christliche Mission im Orient“, came into being, which was renamed the Christoffel-Blindenmission after Christoffel’s death in 1955.

Both then and now, loving care, relief work and help for men, women and children who are not only physically but also socially disabled, i.e. marginalized and frequently discriminated against, were and are at the centre of CBM’s activities.

In contrast to the majority of Christian missionary societies at the beginning of the 20th century, Christoffel’s main emphasis was not on conversion to the Christian faith and introduction to baptism.

However, over the course of many years, CBM has extended its activities to medical care and, wherever possible, to the healing of physical deficits, in particular blindness and visual impairment, and to the treatment, education, rehabilitation and advancement of men and women with disabilities with the objective of including them into all areas of social life. In this too, CBM seeks to tie in with Christ’s healing ministry as conveyed in many Biblical miracle accounts and thus remain true to the social relief focus of Christoffel’s commitment.



## CBM’s vision and mission statement

Many years ago, CBM worded its vision and concept of mission as follows:

„**Unsere Vision:** Eine inklusive Welt, in welcher alle Menschen mit Behinderungen in vollem Umfang ihre Menschenrechte genießen und ihr ganzes Potenzial entfalten können.“

“**Vision Statement:** An inclusive world in which all persons with disabilities enjoy their human rights and achieve their full potential.”

„**Unsere Mission:** Die CBM ist eine internationale christliche Entwicklungshilfeorganisation mit dem Ziel, die Lebensqualität von Menschen mit Behinderungen in den ärmsten Ländern der Welt nachhaltig zu verbessern.“

“**Mission Statement:** CBM is an international Christian development organisation, committed to improving the quality of life of persons with disabilities in the poorest countries of the world.”

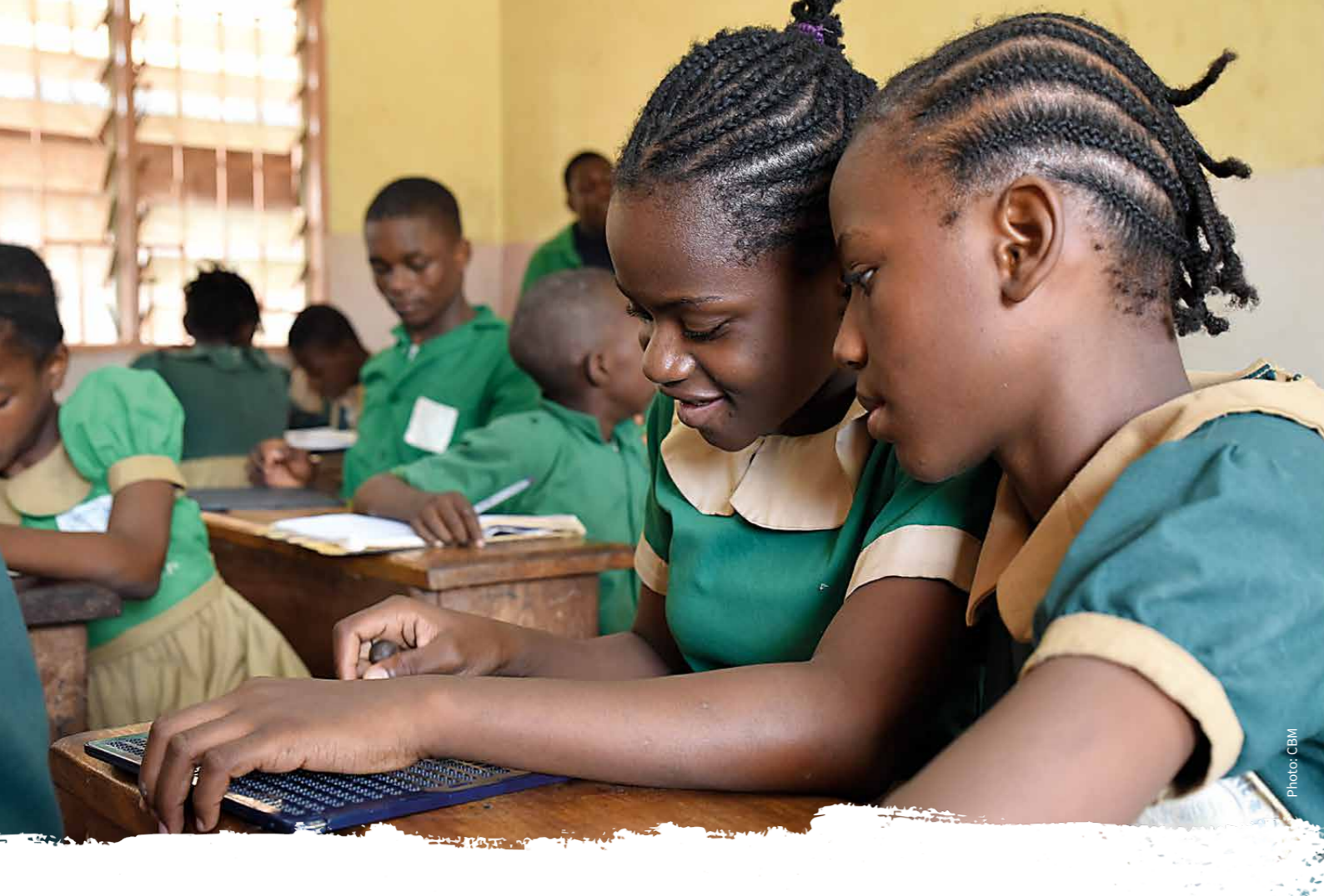


Photo: CBM

# Theological principles

## 1. Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God

What Jesus taught and how he understood the Kingdom of God is the core of his message and ministry. This term does not define a temporal domain or realm of power (*Matthew 20.25-27*) but involves the vision of a world of peace (*Luke 2.14*) and justice (*Matthew 6.33*) beyond all borders. This includes religious boundaries which people set up between each other (*Matthew 15.21-28 and Luke 7.1-10*). The dawning of the Kingdom of God was Jesus' core message. He proclaimed that the era of salvation as described in the Old Testament (*Isaiah 35.5-6*) had arrived through his ministry: "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor" (*Matthew 11.5*). Jesus declared that the Kingdom of God is a future yet current reality (*Matthew 12.28, Luke 11.9 and 17.21*). In the Lord's Prayer (*Matthew 6*), Jesus urged his followers to pray that God's will may be done and

that the Kingdom of God may come. At the same time, he charged them to do God's will on earth. Through actions of helping and healing in line with the example he set, they were to proclaim that the Kingdom of God is already present here and now (*Matthew 10.7-8*). According to the Apostle Paul, the Kingdom of God will be fulfilled when God is "all in all" (*1 Corinthians 15.28*).

## 2. The essence of Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God: reconciliation between God and mankind

Jesus understood his message about the Kingdom of God as God's offer of reconciliation to all mankind. He urged men and women to change their lives and, in trusting themselves to him, to put themselves in the service of God's love. However, in the course of their lives, men and women repeatedly alienate themselves from God and incur guilt by ignoring or missing the origin and purpose of their

lives. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15.11-32*), Jesus presents God as the merciful father who is fundamentally and repeatedly prepared to reconcile himself with his human children and to accept them again in love. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul reminds the church in Corinth: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God" (*2 Corinthians 5.20*).

## 3. Reconciliation with our fellow men and women

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes a way of life which is based on mutual love (*Matthew 5.44, Luke 6.35*). In orientation to him, all Christians, both as individuals and collectively, should strive to overcome discord, conflict and mutual discrimination. The message of Jesus states that the Kingdom of God is open to everyone. In this kingdom, each person should strive towards reconciliation with each other and seek peace (*Matthew 5.9*) in mutual love in accordance with Jesus' commandment.

## 4. Reconciliation (inclusion) of marginalized men and women with the community

In his particular love, Jesus turned to marginalized men and women. Jesus saw himself as God's ambassador with the mandate to "proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free" (*Luke 4.18*).

In his Parable of the Great Banquet (*Luke 14.15-24*), Jesus tells how everyone is invited into the Kingdom of God, both those who are despised in society ("the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame", *Luke 14.21*), and those beyond the borders of their community (*those on "the roads and country lanes," Luke 14.23*).

Telling his Parable of the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10.25-35*) who took charge of the man at the wayside who had fallen into the hands of robbers, Jesus urged the man who had asked him about eternal life to "go and do likewise" (*Luke 10.37*).

He put those to shame who wanted to stone the adulteress by saying: "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (*John 8.7*).

Jesus firmly contradicted the prevalent conviction that a person's disability was due to God's punishment for some sinful action done by him or even by his parents in the past (*John 9.2-3*).

Jesus also made it clear that his mission of service included children who he singled out as an example by virtue of the simplicity of their trust (*Matthew 18.3, Mark 9.37 and 10.14*).

By way of a summary, it can be said that Jesus did not tolerate anyone being excluded from the Kingdom of God on account of their origin, religion, gender, age, status, disposition or any particular physical or mental preconditions.

In this sense, Jesus was a pioneer of what we refer to as "inclusion" today. This is also reflected in the account of the healing of the ten men suffering from leprosy. Jesus told them to go to the priests in Jerusalem, the social and religious authorities of that time, in order to have their healing officially confirmed (*Luke 17.14*).

Jesus even identified himself with socially despised, rejected and disabled men and women: "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (*Matthew 25.40*).

Hence, reconciliation is at the heart of Jesus' message.

Since, in today's world, men and women are irreconciled and hostile towards each other in so many different ways, Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God is also relevant in our times. Any discord and divisions among men and women should be overcome through reconciliation which comes out of the love of God.

# Conclusions

## 5. The ethics of the Kingdom of God: inclusion

Jesus' ethical standards on life in the Kingdom of God are encountered throughout the Gospels, but in concentrated form in the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5 – 7*). They are summarised in the two prime commandments – to love God with all our being and to love our neighbour as ourselves (*Deuteronomy 6.5, Luke 10.27*).

According to this commandment, the practice of loving our neighbour is a reciprocal act of relationship. A sincere deed or gift of love, given in conviction and received by the recipient in gratitude enriches both the giver and the recipient of love in equal measure and thus constitutes an inclusive community bound together in love and this corresponds with Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God. Whoever is, in this way, prompted by love to give or act, incurs no loss. Instead, his or her deed of love endows his or her life with a sense of purpose and fulfilment. On the other hand, whoever receives in love need not be ashamed of his or her neediness. By accepting and appreciating this gift or deed of love in gratitude, the recipient takes pleasure in the expression of solidarity with the giver. Mutual respect and the deed of love enable both sides to

meet each other at eye level and thus result in the inclusion of different men and women in a fellowship based on an equal footing. They thus become an expression of the Kingdom of God.

## 6. This is why the Christian faith declares the following:

1. Through Jesus Christ, there is reconciliation between God and mankind.
2. In the name of Jesus, men and women can and should find reconciliation in their relationships (peace and conflict resolutions).
3. Reconciliation can and should take place, in particular between marginalized men and women and the community in which they live (inclusion).

# The identity and mandate of CBM

Together with all Christians around the world, CBM believes that God's love of the world and all men and women has uniquely manifested itself in the life and message of Jesus. In receiving this love from God's hands and in passing it on to fellow men and women, CBM understands itself as a partner in the Kingdom of God.

CBM's decisions and action should be based on a clear understanding of the divine

commandment to love God and our neighbour as ourselves (*Luke 10.27*).

CBM sees its mandate as following the example set by Jesus and initiating a process of change towards an inclusive world where all men and women with disabilities can enjoy their human rights and exercise their potential to the fullest extent. That is CBM's specific mandate.

Based on the reconciled relationship between God and mankind (loving God with our whole being) and in reconciliation among one another (loving our neighbour as ourselves), the Kingdom of God forms the basis for CBM's striving to follow the message of Jesus and his example. This is the foundation of our mandate and prompts us to promote, practise and spur on inclusion, by committing ourselves to helping to create a society in which all men and women with disabilities can enjoy their human rights and exercise their potential to the fullest extent.

Building on this foundation, we want, as far as possible, to base each decision and work process on the simple clarity of the commandments to love both God and our neighbour as ourselves. In doing so, we are guided by the following action principles:

## CBM's action principles

### 1. attentive:

We are convinced that God's blessings are meant for everyone. That is why we deliberately see people with disabilities as being "in the image of God". We want to encounter them both openly and attentively. We are thankful that, in many regions throughout the world, our commitment is positively accepted and appreciated, and, because of that, we have also experienced considerable attention. That is not something which can be taken for granted.

### 2. life-changing:

In line with Jesus' message about the Kingdom of God, our action focuses on changing the living conditions of men and women who are affected by suffering. Their situation is such that, by their own resources, they cannot overcome the restrictions which confront them in their daily lives. We want them to find fulfilment in life by being able to develop their gifts without restrictions and to fully participate in the life of society.

### 3. mobilising:

We are not satisfied with observing how men and women with disabilities are defined by their restrictions and thus excluded from participating in the life of society. Through our commitment, we want to contribute to enabling them to fully develop their latent potential and to gain the experience of being recognised and accepted by their fellow men and women in the community as equals.

## It follows on that:

1. We aim for quality in what we do.
2. We are good stewards of our resources with a key focus on sustainability.
3. We communicate honestly and respectfully.
4. We promote and practise inclusion.

# Summary

CBM is an international Christian development organisation whose prime objective is to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities living in the poorest countries of the world, irrespective of their social or ethnic origin, gender or faith.

As a Christian organisation, CBM strives to follow the message and example of Jesus as expressed by loving God and one's neighbour. CBM's objective in following the example of Jesus is to communicate that each individual can be reconciled with God to whom he or she owes his or her existence and purpose.

Anyone wishing to live in line with the example that Jesus set should strive to be reconciled with his or her fellow men and women and to settle any discord and thus to contribute to the process of overcoming suppression and exclusion.

That is why CBM, like Jesus, is working to change attitudes, conduct and political convictions which marginalize, exclude and impoverish men and women due to their disabilities. CBM advocates their inclusion, in other words full participation in the social life of their community.

**CBM thus sees itself as a Christian organisation following in the steps of Jesus.**



Photo: CBM



**CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission e.V.**

Stubenwald-Allee 5 · 64625 Bensheim, Germany

Telephone: +49 (0) 6251 131-131 · Fax: +49 (0) 6251 131-139 · E-Mail: [info@cbm.de](mailto:info@cbm.de)

[www.cbm.org](http://www.cbm.org)

**Donation account**

IBAN: DE46 3702 0500 0000 0020 20 · BIC: BFSWDE33XXX

The CBM logo and brand are legally protected. With every donation to CBM, you help improve the lives of people with disabilities in the poorest areas of the world. We use your donation for the purpose you specify or where it is most urgently needed.