

“Preach the Word and Love your People”



Pastor Craig Howard

The Executive Board of the Covenant Brethren Church is thankful for and wishes to recognize the dedication of its pastors serving within the denomination. With that said, we are going to begin a series of articles recognizing pastors that have served the same congregation for more than 30 years. In this first article we would like to honor the remarkable contributions of Pastor Craig Howard at Brake Covenant Brethren Church, located near Petersburg, West Virginia. His dedication to his church community and commitment to faith are truly remarkable.

I traveled along and through the mountains of West Virginia last month on a cold morning to Brake Covenant Brethren Church, located just outside Petersburg, West Virginia. The purpose was to interview the Senior Pastor, Brother Craig Howard. Pastor Craig Howard is deeply connected with God and his congregation; it's ingrained in his DNA and resides in his heart. One thing that stands out when speaking with him is that he engages with you directly and sincerely. Whatever apprehension I had when I first met him for the interview was quickly overcome when it became clear to me that here was a man who wasn't talking to me but was talking with me. A notable characteristic of Pastor Howard is his longstanding commitment to serving others.

Protestant senior pastors in the United States usually serve for five to seven years, according to the Climb website. This figure represents the average for senior positions. Tenure for all pastoral staff, including associate and youth ministers, tends to be shorter, often ranging from three to four years. Recent data suggest a movement toward the higher end of the five-to-seven-year range for lead pastors, though some historical studies reported averages as low as 3.6 years.

Brother Craig Howard has been the pastor of Brake Covenant Brethren Church for forty-five years. He often states that although his father was a preacher, he once told God he would do anything except become one. After attending a small Bible college in Maryland, he originally trained in Christian media, working in several TV programs and hosting a radio show. In the end, God led him to become a minister. For the past forty-five years, he has devoted his love and ministry to the congregation at Brake CBC, showing a clear dedication to his church and its members in every way. He says that although he has remained open to opportunities at other churches, God intended for him to stay where he is, and the church has greatly benefited from his commitment. He actively seeks opportunities to be used by God and to participate in His wonderful plan. God has sought his heart and his time each day of his existence.

Love has greatly influenced his journey. He explains that when he finally decided to enter the ministry, an older, very successful pastor sought to give him advice and told him to "Preach the Word and love your people, and don't get lazy." This cherished advice from this mentor has inspired him and shaped his journey, becoming the center of a fulfilling ministry. Since becoming a pastor, Brother Craig has never forgotten his mentor's advice and prioritizes expressing love to his congregation in various ways every day. He says that when he first began considering how to show love, he started buying flowers for the women of the church on their birthdays. However, as the congregation grew, he ultimately had to discontinue this practice. He still loves with a passionate and active affection.



Brake Covenant Brethren Church

Like many, though not all, CBC churches in the continental United States, the Brake Covenant Brethren Church serves as a rural congregation. It became part of the CBC's Central Allegheny Region just over three years ago and now serves as a vital member of a rapidly growing denomination. According to the church's website, they are a theologically conservative church with mostly traditional service structures. They incorporate hymns, praise, and worship into their services, and although they are a rural congregation, they proudly assert that they are neither isolated nor out of touch. The church averages about 160 on a typical Sunday. Due to Brother Craig's leadership and enduring love, Brake CBC has gathered a multitude of ministries for all ages and a healthy age spread in the congregation. You can find information about the different ministries on the church's website, breakcbc.com. Pastor Craig encourages the formation of small groups at Brake, and they are a common practice within the church community. These groups include an online Bible Study Group, junior youth, senior group, junior church, and men's and women's fellowships. Brother Craig believes this effort aims to connect with groups at their level and is a strong advocate for children's ministries, including those for toddlers. Much of the church's activity is due to Pastor Howard's dedication, love, and seriousness of purpose.

During the pastor's tenure, Brake CBC has expanded in both the size of its building and its congregation, as well as its influence in the community. Throughout his tenure, Pastor Howard has demonstrated his talents and dedication not only within the church but also as a community and denominational leader during his spare time. He serves the CBC's executive board in sub-committees, including structural and regional development, adult and youth fellowship, and publications, and is the Central Allegheny Regional Executive Board Chair. His wife, Camille, is also a member of the publications committee for the CBC community of churches. He is the president of the local ministerial association and participates actively in various civic organizations. He was a wrestling coach and landlord. He and his wife jointly own a local newspaper, where she serves as the executive editor.

He has been married to Camille since 1979. They have a son and a daughter, who love the Lord and have families of their own.



Howard Family Christmas 2025

Pastor Howard loves to travel and has been to many parts of the world on short-term mission trips and a couple of pleasure trips. He is a gifted man, and his faith keeps him grounded in God's kingdom with a strong belief that the Bible is the infallible word of God and that there is only one way to heaven: accepting Jesus's sacrifice on the cross as payment for our sins. One of his favorite verses in the bible comes from John's Gospel: John 14:6 serves as his standard when... Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" **John 14:6(NKJ)**.



Pastor Howard and Camille.



Brother Craig Howard in the Pulpit at Brake Covenant Brethren Church

At the conclusion of my interview with Pastor Howard, we reached the anticipated question: What are your thoughts on retirement? He quickly replied that God has not intended for him to retire yet. Over 45 years of preaching the word, loving his people, staying dedicated and obedient, and not getting lazy, Pastor Howard has given his all, and his all is as good as it gets. God bless you, brother!

“For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” **1 Corinthians 13: 2-13 (NKJV)**.

Steve Jennings, CBC Editor