Steps of Faith
ON MISSION TO WEST AFRICA

A closed door, a brand-new pastor, and a vision trip—each one of these, a step of faith. Yet each one, a step toward an amazing mission opportunity for an individual family and an entire church family.

Josiah Lutrull serves as worship leader at Nansemond River Baptist Church in Suffolk and is also a high school teacher. Josiah and his wife, Stephanie, have been appointed by the IMB as missionaries to West Africa. Along with their children, Liam and Cade, they will embark on their assignment in January 2016.

“It has been quite a process for us discerning God’s will,” says Josiah. “Stephanie and I met on a mission trip, so a desire for missions has always been part of our relationship.”

The Lutrulls actually received an IMB appointment a little over a year ago, but it was originally for Asia, not West Africa. “We went on the vision trip to Asia, came home, and just did not have a peace about going there,” explains Josiah. They shared this with IMB leadership and continued the appointment process for another location to be determined. “I had already sold my house and quit my job. They had filled my position by the time I figured out we were not going.” A year later, the Lutrulls received an appointment to West Africa.

During their time of waiting, Josiah and Stephanie were confused, having walked through the process but not feeling God’s leading to go to Asia. However, they now see it as His providential delay.

Nansemond River was without a lead pastor at the time. When it became clear that Josiah would not be going to the mission field right away, he was asked to serve on the Pastor Search Team. The team worked through its process, presented Ryan Brice to the church in June, and the church voted unanimously to call him as its new lead pastor.

After learning of the Lutrulls’ new IMB appointment to West Africa, Pastor Ryan felt called to lead the church in a West Africa partnership.

His first day in the church office was July 6, 2015, and he and Josiah boarded a plane August 9. They were headed to West Africa to explore ways Nansemond River could partner with the Lutrells and others serving there.

What causes a pastor to take a mission trip to West Africa only five weeks into his pastoral tenure? For Pastor Ryan, it was only natural.

“I clearly communicated to the Pastor Search Team and to the church during the candidate process that missions was a passion of mine. God took my passion for missions and fused it with a church that was ready to discover what a missions partnership would look like. God provided the perfect opportunity for it all to come together since He was calling a couple [whom everyone loved] out of the church to the field.”

Nansemond River plans to send two teams in 2016 to West Africa. Their long-range goal is to work up to sending four to six teams a year by 2018.

RESOURCES
WEBSITE:
nansemondriver.com