



This information has kindly been provided by the Church Mission Society.

Christopher Jones was educated at Repton and Bailliol College, Oxford, taking a B.A. degree in agriculture. He then spent some years in West Africa, working on agriculture and rural development at the Rural draining Centre at Asaba. From 1967-68 he and his wife Ita served as missionaries in local connection, centred at Okigwe, Nigeria.

Mrs. Jones trained as a nurse at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. Their marriage took place in 1963 and they have two daughters, Catherine and Annabel.

Asked how the call came to serve the Church overseas Mr. Jones replied: "I'm not quite sure. The family farm gave rise to a desire to study agriculture. Then there arose a sort of Oxfam idea. Six months as a volunteer at the Rural Training Centre, Asaba, was my final undoing!"

After a period of missionary training spent at Crowther Hall (the, CMS College) at Selly Oak, Birmingham, Mr. and Mrs. Jones went to Kenya as missionaries of the Society. They were located to the Maasai Rural Training Centre, Isinya, which had been brought into being a few years before, following a series of disasters which had struck the Maasai people. Drought and then floods meant that most of their cattle were lost. So a ranch was started where cattle-breeding, fight against disease and much else besides was taught.

When Christopher Jones arrived it was to take charge of the 2,000 acre ranch, some three hundred beef cattle and a couple of hundred Merino sheep, and to help the Maasai men who came for two-week courses. His experience in Nigeria was invaluable, and Ita was able to help a great deal in work among the women.

This time at Isinya was a holding operation until the arrival of the permanent farm manager, and the Joneses returned to this country early in 1970. Their hope then was that one day they would go again to Nigeria, the land already familiar to them, to serve once more in the field of rural development.

At the beginning of 1971 the way to Nigeria did open up, and Mr Jones (followed later by his wife and family) left for Lagos on January 20th, to work under the Christian Council of Nigeria on agricultural schemes at Uturu Farm, Okigwe (East Central State), and to coordinate the agricultural work of the wider rehabilitation programme.

Uturu Farm is situated in a part of Nigeria that was affected by the war. For 12 months it was in the 'front line' - Okigwe is 25 miles north of Umuahia, 40 miles north-east of Owerri and 60 miles south of Enugu. The land was mined, crops ravaged and houses damaged. When CMS missionary Christopher Jones arrived at Uturu early in 1971, houses had been repaired and a start had been made to clear the land. Based in Uturu Farm, Mr. Jones and a colleague supervised co-operative farming schemes. The further aim was to start 10 groups

of 15 young literate men on a permanent career of farming in other parts of East Central State. CCN lends the farmers money for housing, seeds and tools. Although the men live in individual houses and farm their own plots, they are still part of a particular community project, working together in processing and selling their crops. These men will stay on these farms for life so, although they are trainees, they are training on their farms.

Soil erosion, weeds, incorrect spacing of plants, people running out of money because they have not kept to their budgets and plans, are some of the problems Mr. Jones had to deal with at Uturu. Part of the purpose was that these communities should have a Christian basis and both Mr. and Mrs. Jones were involved in this work. She also ran a small clinic.