

# OLIVE GRUEN

## Missionary Teacher in China & Taiwan

BORN: 1883 St. Louis, Missouri

DIED: MAY 11, 1963 St. Louis, Missouri

**OLIVE GRUEN WAS THE FIRST** Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod woman missionary to China and the first LCMS missionary to Taiwan. A schoolteacher in St. Louis, Gruen was commissioned in 1921 to serve as a teaching missionary in China. Her task was to establish a girl's high school in Hankow that would train young women to be Christian teachers in China. The school opened in 1924 with 17 students. Five years later, during a political revolution, Chinese Communists burned the school to the ground. Gruen was forced to flee, but later returned to resume her work.

In 1937, Gruen became director of the orphanage in Enshih, caring for dozens of children, including foundling infants. That year the Japanese army attacked China, bombing Enshih within yards of the orphanage. The children were evacuated and brought to safety, yet for the next several years Gruen struggled to care for the orphans amidst the war. In 1941, she was appointed director of the girl's school in Wanhsien, where she continued caring for orphans in addition to her teaching work. She remained there until 1949 when she was forced out of China by the Communist takeover under Mao Zedong.

In 1951, Gruen began serving refugees from mainland China in Taiwan, marking the beginning of the LCMS's mission work there. She worked hard organizing schools and teacher-training programs, Sunday Schools and Bible classes.

Finally, with diminished eyesight, Gruen retired at the age of 78, after many years of service in bringing the Gospel to Chinese people. She returned to St. Louis in 1961, always reminding friends that she would return to Taiwan in a heartbeat.

Once, in response to the question, "Why go back to the China mission field?" Gruen replied: "With the God-given opportunities for preaching the Gospel, could the missionary stay at home and wait till the Chinese had smoothed the way? Could the servant of God do otherwise than stay with them, and now, when they need help and comfort, share with them that greatest of all treasures—that strengthening, life-giving message of God's love? If this is not enough, there is always only one answer: For the love of Christ constraineth us" (Gruen 274).

Gruen found her Christian calling, remaining a true missionary of the cross until her death on May 11, 1963. During her long service, Gruen had faced numerous obstacles, but she remained a faithful missionary, dedicated to bringing the love of Christ to those who needed to hear it. When times were difficult, Gruen, by God's grace, persevered.

**For more information about the 175th anniversary of the LCMS, visit [lcms.org/175](http://lcms.org/175).**

### DISCOVER MORE

David Kohl, "*The History of Early Lutheran Schools in China*," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 6–22.

Benjamin Riley, "*Olive Gruen: The Connection Between LCMS Mainland China and Taiwan Missions*," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 87, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 30–40.

Olive Gruen, "*Why Go Back to the China Mission-Field?*" *The Lutheran Witness* 60, no. 16 (August 5, 1941): 274–75.



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NO OTHER NAME

– 175 YEARS –



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