Luther’s friend and pastor, who made Reformation theology practical for churches

Johannes Bugenhagen

Born: June 24, 1485 | Wollin, Germany (formerly Pomerania)

Died: April 20, 1558 | Wittenberg, Germany

Johannes Bugenhagen is famous for his role as the pastor at the Wittenberg city church, since this made him Martin Luther’s pastor and confessor. His lasting importance, however, lies in his ability to apply the Reformation message to the everyday life of the churches and laity. He wrote several church orders (manuals of standard practices) for a variety of Reformation communities. These orders applied Luther’s theology to various cultural contexts by balancing the non-essential preferences of each community with the essential universal doctrines. He set forth good church practices in both the liturgy (e.g. proper distribution of the Lord’s Supper) and the non-liturgical role of the church — education of the youth, visitation of the sick and civic duty. His church orders became the model that many other churches used for creating their own best practices.
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