



ADVANCEMENT LEADERS CONFERENCE

September 22-23, 2026 | Orlando, Florida

CULTIVATING GENEROSITY

Deepening Donor Relationships for Lasting Kingdom Impact

Advancement is ultimately about people, relationships, and faithful stewardship. Resource development leaders serve at the intersection of institutional mission and Kingdom generosity, helping connect giving partners with opportunities to invest in the work God is accomplishing through biblical higher education.

The Advancement Leaders Conference brings together experienced practitioners and peers to explore practical strategies for strengthening donor relationships, cultivating major gifts, building sustainable planned giving programs, improving donor retention, and leading advancement as a ministry. Through presentations, discussion, and collaborative learning, participants will leave encouraged, equipped, and prepared to strengthen their institution's advancement efforts.

This 1½-day conference begins at 9:00 AM on Tuesday, September 22, and concludes with lunch on Wednesday, September 23.

Who Should Attend?

Designed for presidents, vice presidents, chief advancement officers, development directors, alumni relations leaders, annual fund leaders, major gift officers, and others responsible for fundraising, donor engagement, advancement communications, or institutional resource development. Whether you lead an established advancement office or serve in multiple leadership roles, this conference provides practical insights specifically for biblical and Christian higher education.

What You'll Gain

- ▶ Practical strategies to strengthen donor relationships and fundraising efforts
- ▶ Ideas from experienced advancement leaders serving biblical higher education
- ▶ Meaningful connections with peers facing similar opportunities and challenges
- ▶ A Personal Action Plan to guide your next steps after the conference

Conference Experience

This conference combines practical presentations, interactive Q&A, and meaningful peer conversation to help leaders strengthen their institutions and expand their professional network. Whether attending on-site or virtually, participants will leave with practical ideas, valuable resources, and encouragement for the work ahead.

Pricing

On-Site Registration

ABHE Members: \$500

Early Bird Member Rate: \$450

Non-Members: \$600

Early Bird Non-Member Rate: \$550

Early Bird Deadline: September 1, 2026

On-site registration includes full engagement in the conference program, Q&A participation, networking and fellowship with attendees and presenters, access to video recordings after the conference, lodging at the nearby Hilton Garden Inn for the nights of September 21 & 22, all conference meals and refreshments, and access to conference resources.

Virtual Registration

ABHE Members: \$200

Non-Members: \$300

Virtual registration includes full engagement in the conference program, Q&A participation, access to video recordings after the conference, and access to conference resources.

Location

Conferences are held at: The ABHE Weber Center, 5850 T.G. Lee Blvd., Suite 130, Orlando, FL 32822
Virtual participants will join via Zoom.

Cancellation Policy

In the event of a personal registration cancellation, fees paid in advance are refundable, less a \$50 cancellation fee, provided written notice is received by ABHE no later than three weeks prior to the event. No refunds will be granted after that date. No refunds are provided for no-shows.

DAY 1 TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

9:00 – 9:15 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

David Medders, Exec. VP; Eric Brandt, Leadership Academy Director | ABHE

9:15 – 10:00 SESSION 1: THE SPIRIT-LED FUNDRAISER: FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR A GOD-CENTERED ADVANCEMENT MINISTRY

Mark Smith, Former President | Columbia International University (SC)

What does it look like when the Holy Spirit is the true director of your advancement ministry? God is at work in the convictions, practices, and posture of the people who raise resources for his kingdom, not just in the outcomes. Consider the principles God's Spirit teaches those who lead with open hands, and how they might reshape your own approach to resource development.

- Grounding your advancement philosophy in biblical stewardship
- Recognizing the Spirit's role in donor relationships and generosity
- Identifying the principles that endure across every season of fundraising
- Applying Spirit-led convictions to your daily advancement practice

10:00 – 10:30 Q&A DISCUSSION

10:30 – 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

10:45 – 11:30 SESSION 2: FROM FAITHFUL GIVER TO CAMPAIGN CHAMPION: IDENTIFYING AND CULTIVATING YOUR NEXT MAJOR DONOR

Pat McLaughlin, President | McLaughlin Resource Group, LLC (MI)

Your next major donor is almost certainly already in your database. What's often missing is a clear strategy for identifying who they are, cultivating the relationship over time, and making the right ask at the right moment. Major donors grow from consistent engagement and a thoughtful strategy built over time. Consider the proven principles of major donor cultivation and what it takes to move your institution toward its next significant campaign.

- Seeing your donor base through the lens of major gift potential
- Knowing the 5-step process for identifying, cultivating, and soliciting a major donor
- Building the path from consistent annual giving to a significant major gift ask
- Preparing your team and your president to engage major donors with confidence

11:30 – 12:00 Q&A DISCUSSION

12:00 – 12:15 A WORD FROM OUR CONFERENCE SPONSOR

McLaughlin Resource Group, LLC (Pat McLaughlin)

12:15 – 1:00 LUNCH BREAK

1:00 – 1:45 SESSION 3: STORYTELLING THAT GIVES: USING AI TO GROW GENEROSITY

Bart Caylor, President | Caylor Solutions (IN)

Every gift begins with a story well told. This session explores how advancement teams can use AI to strengthen the storytelling that moves donors to give: shaping a clear case for support, personalizing communications, and creating content that builds trust over time. Along the way you will see how the right tools can fit even a small office, so your outreach feels personal at scale while keeping donor relationships at the center. No technical background needed.

- Use AI to shape a clear, compelling case for support that inspires donors to give
- Personalize donor communications that build trust and deepen relationships over time
- Choose AI tools that fit the real capacity and goals of a small advancement team

DAY 1 CONTINUED

1:45 – 2:15 Q&A DISCUSSION

2:15 – 2:30 REFRESHMENT BREAK

2:30 – 3:15 SESSION 4: FROM CONVERSATION TO CULTURE: BUILDING A PLANNED GIVING PROGRAM THAT LASTS

Clay Perkins, Exec. Dir. of Legacy Services | Financial Planning Ministry (CA)

Starting planned giving conversations is one thing. Building the kind of program that produces consistent results year after year is another. With donor relationships already deepened and doors open, the next step is putting the structures, habits, and institutional commitments in place that make legacy giving a sustained part of your advancement strategy rather than an occasional effort. Consider what it takes to move planned giving from aspiration to program.

- ▶ Moving from occasional conversations to a structured legacy giving strategy
- ▶ Knowing how to steward and cultivate confirmed planned giving donors over time
- ▶ Understanding the institutional commitments that make a legacy program sustainable
- ▶ Setting multi-year planned giving goals & building accountability into your strategy

3:15 – 4:00 Q&A DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

5:00 – 6:30 DINNER — Sponsored by Financial Planning Ministry (Clay Perkins)

DAY 2 WEDNESDAY | SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

9:00 – 9:15 INSIGHTS FROM THE WORD — David Medders

9:15 – 10:00 SESSION 5: THE STEWARD'S JOURNEY: RAISING MONEY AS KINGDOM MINISTRY

Scott Rodin, Senior Consultant & Chief Strategy Officer | The FOCUS Group, Inc. (WA)

Every person in your database is on a journey, moving either toward the freedom of the faithful steward or back into the bondage of the owner's mindset. Advancement leaders who understand this journey do more than raise money; they walk alongside giving partners in one of the most meaningful dimensions of discipleship. Consider what it looks like to approach fundraising as kingdom ministry, and how a steward theology transforms the giving partner relationships in your care.

- ▶ Examining your own identity as a steward leader and what it means for how you show up for your giving partners
- ▶ Understanding the steward's journey in your giving partners and how it shapes your approach to cultivation
- ▶ Reframing advancement work as kingdom ministry and the spiritual posture it requires
- ▶ Applying steward theology to your relationships and priorities with the giving partners in your care

10:00 – 10:30 Q&A DISCUSSION

10:30 – 10:45 REFRESHMENT BREAK

10:45 – 11:30 SESSION 6: ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION: YOUR DONORS, YOUR CONTEXT, YOUR NEXT STEP

Discuss the most pressing advancement/fundraising issues you are facing with both the panel of presenters and attendee affinity groups. Create a draft of your Personal Action Plan based on the most significant and urgent issues you should address following the conference.

11:30 – 12:00 Q&A DISCUSSION & WRAP-UP

12:00 – 1:30 LUNCH

Questions?

For registration or conference questions, email conferences@abhe.org or call us at (407) 207-0808

With Appreciation

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