

# Sandy Wisdom-Martin shares family testimony

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NASHVILLE, III. (BP)—When Sandy Wisdom-Martin, national Woman’s Missionary Union executive director-treasurer, watched her brother Doug’s baptism last year, it represented a story of God’s faithfulness and Southern Baptist cooperation.

After her mother shared the good news about the upcoming baptism, Wisdom-Martin rearranged her travel schedule to be there. It took place at Lake Sallateeska near her family’s childhood home in rural southern Illinois.



A childhood photo of Sandy Wisdom-Martin and her brother Doug. (Submitted photo)

Wisdom-Martin, former executive director-treasurer of Texas WMU, said

her family attended a small Southern Baptist church growing up. Her brother Doug had walked the aisle there as a child, but by his own admission, never made a true profession of faith in Christ.

But during the COVID-19 pandemic, Doug and his wife began attending a campus of Lighthouse Community Church in Nashville, Ill. There he professed faith in Christ and sought baptism.

Wisdom-Martin said it was an “overwhelming” experience seeing her brother’s baptism take place at the same lake where she attended camp and surrendered to a call to ministry.

“It’s such a special place in my life, as it’s where I heard God’s call on my life and I responded,” Wisdom-Martin said.

“Just the place itself is special, but nothing could have prepared me for my mother calling to say my brother was getting baptized. It was so incredible. It was a story six decades in the making.

## **Not in isolation**

“The story of my brother doesn’t happen in isolation; it happens because of the community of Southern Baptists. I’ve always been a strong advocate of what we do as Southern Baptists, but that day it was even more personal because it was my brother. I was amazed at the connections, but also the timespan of everything that had to happen for decades for that moment in time to happen.”

Doug’s salvation is laced with Southern Baptist connections, which begin with Danny Donato, former pastor of Lighthouse Community Church.

Donato was attending a small college in Lexington, Ky., in the late 1990s but it closed and he transferred to Boyce College in Louisville.

While there he started attending Highview Baptist Church. At that time, the youth pastor was Jimmy Scroggins, and the senior pastor was Kevin Ezell, now president of the SBC North American Mission Board.

He interned with Scroggins. Scroggins currently serves as lead pastor of Family Church, a network of neighborhood churches in South Florida.

This gave Donato the opportunity to grow not only under Scroggins, but under Ezell as well.

“I had an opportunity, while under Jimmy’s leadership, to get to know Kevin and just watch him,” Donato said.

“He was the first younger pastor that I got to sit under. I got to see Highview launch their second campus, and to see what went into that before church planting was really a ‘cool’ thing to do.

“I was ordained by Kevin and the deacons, and I really learned how to be bold and courageous in leadership from him. He’s had that mindset all throughout his ministry from his time as a pastor to now with NAMB. It’s been a unique experience to be that close to guys who have been so impactful for the Kingdom and been such visionary leaders.”

Years later, as the pastor of Lighthouse Community Church, Donato continued this philosophy of church planting.

## **‘God was gripping Doug’s heart’**

Lighthouse receives some financial support from NAMB, and a few years ago, the congregation started its second campus in Okawville, Ill.

That is where Doug Wisdom and his wife, Becky, met Donato. They were invited to visit the church by folks who already were attending.

When the couple went through the new members' class, Donato said he talked with them about the gospel and what it meant to be saved.

"You could tell God was gripping Doug's heart, and it was very evident that God was doing something," Donato said.



Pastor Danny Donato prepares to baptize Doug Wisdom in 2021.  
(Submitted photo)

It wasn't until Doug's baptism sometime later at Lake Sallateeska that Donato made the connection about Doug's relation to Sandy of the WMU.

He was amazed at the connection and how the story progressed over time.

"It's the beautiful mosaic of the kingdom," Donato said. "God is constantly working and doing things that will bring Him glory."

Wisdom-Martin said it is amazing that her support of NAMB was actually going to the church where her brother would come to faith and be baptized.

"For as long as I can remember I have supported the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering," Wisdom-Martin said. "Everything that I've given over the last 50 years has been worth it, and I would give it all over again, because it helped lead to my brother's faith.

"I want that for all of us and our friends and family members. I think that's

the power of what we do together.”