

‘Wasting my breath’: Southern faith leaders wary of promoting vaccines | POLITICO

By Dan Goldberg

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State health officials are conducting informal focus groups and outreach to try to ease pastors’ concerns about discussing vaccination, but progress is often elusive, they said. Many pastors said they have already lost congregants to fights over coronavirus restrictions and fear risking further desertions by promoting vaccinations. Others said their congregations are so ideologically opposed to the vaccine that discussing it would not be worth the trouble.

“If I put forth effort to push it, I’d be wasting my breath,” said Nathan White, a pastor at Liberty Baptist Church in Skipwith, Va., a small town near the North Carolina border.

The pastors POLITICO spoke with are located across Virginia and Tennessee, mostly in predominantly white communities. Some in rural areas lead overwhelmingly conservative congregations while some in more suburban areas said their churches were more politically mixed. Each pastor had been vaccinated but not all were eager to discuss it with their congregations.

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