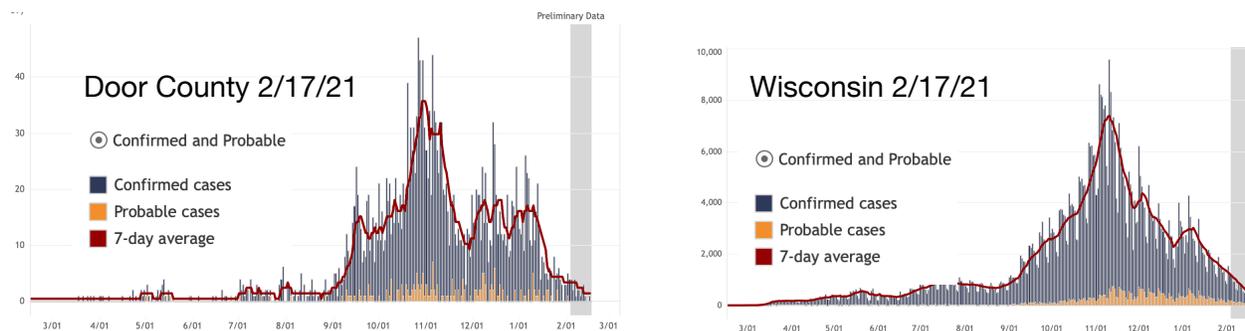


Update on COVID 19

We are living in unprecedented times as we deal with the COVID19 Pandemic. Our church has been closed for services for over a year now. We are so ready for this to be over. We long for any semblance of normality. The question is whether it is possible? I would like to share with you my perspective. Although I have a medical background, I certainly don't have all the answers or even the questions needed, but will try to give a personal perspective on the issue.

The following two graphs show Confirmed and Probable Cases of COVID over the last year in Wisconsin and Door County. They show that during the first half of last year, we were doing fairly well, and far better than some other states. Then the fall hit bringing colder weather and lots of tourists to view the Door County Color. Cases started to rise at an exponential rate. Cases in the state and Door County peaked around mid November with number of new cases being over 7,000 for our state on a given day. There was a brief respite, and then came the Christmas holidays during which we had another surge. Finally by mid January of 2021 we started to see a decrease. That trend has continued and we are now at levels similar to August. We have weathered the storm, but paid a high price in terms of death and stress on our healthcare system as well as other frontline jobs.

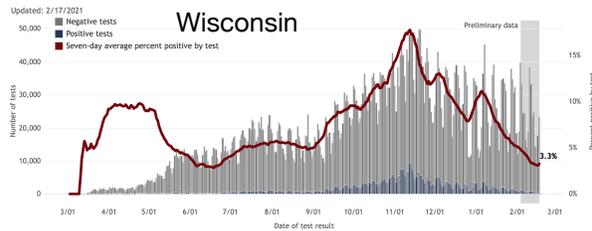


Why have the numbers improved since mid January? I firmly believe most important, we took this pandemic more serious. We had accumulated data which proved that public health measures (wearing masks, maintaining social distancing, traveling only when absolutely necessary, practicing good hand washing and strict cleaning measures made a big difference. We could protect ourselves and others by caring for each other, and doing the right things. We also realized that if we don't follow these public health measures we will see a significant increase in the spread of the virus. At the present time this is our best method to control viral spread.

How do we know when it is safe to reopen? This is the big question and as we learn more about the Sars Cov 2 virus, we have some answers but also more questions. First of all we need to know about the **virus activity in our area**. There are a number of things that we can follow. The first is following the number of new cases as described in the above graphs. We can also follow testing. In particular we can follow the Percent Positivity. This is the number of positive tests divided by the total number of tests over a set period of time. The following graph shows the Percent Positivity of Tests for Wisconsin. Early on the Percent Positivity was high mainly because not enough tests were being done. Later the increase in Positivity was more related to the activity of the virus in the state. Testing is crucial in managing the virus. It allows us to identify areas of high activity. We can then do "Contact Tracing" to identify who were in contact with those infected. Isolation and quarantine can then be used to control

spread. The World Health Organization feels that the Percent Positivity by Tests has to be less than 5% to allow for adequate Contact Tracing to occur. In addition many feel that testing only symptomatic people will miss as many as 40% of people who are infected but not symptomatic. The Percent Positivity for Wisconsin in the last 7 days was 3.2%. It was 1.6% for Door County.

7-day percent positive by test, total tests by day

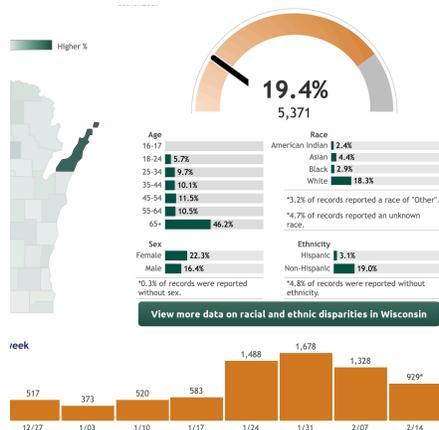


Second we can look at **“Case Activity”**. This level is based on the number of cases per 100,000 residents and the current trajectory (increasing, same, or decreasing). The most recent Case Activity for Door County is “High” at 131.9 per 100,000 residents and showing no significant change. Of note the case activity for Door County the end of January was “Very High” at 438 per

100,000.

We can also look at Emergency Department visits and monitor the number of people with COVID-like symptoms as well as those who have Influenza-like symptoms. Of note we are seeing less people with Influenza-like symptoms. This might be another indication that public health measures like wearing masks, and social distancing, etc are having a positive effect.

A third consideration is the presence **variants** in the virus. When Sars Cov 2 virus multiplies there is always a possibility of producing a new variant. The more virus available to replicate the greater the chance of seeing new variants. One of those variants is B.1.1.7 is a strain first discovered in England. There it has become the dominant strain. It could become dominant in the US by mid March. It appears to be more infective than the wild strain, and it may also be more lethal. There are several other variants also present in the US. Vaccines currently in use appear to offer significant protection against getting a severe illness with these variants. Present public health measures such as wearing masks, social distancing, hand washing etc are our best means of containing the spread of them.



A fourth consideration is available **vaccines**. Currently there are 2 vaccines available, the Pfizer vaccine and the Moderna vaccine. Both require two injections with the Pfizer vaccine given 3 weeks apart and the Moderna vaccine given 4 weeks apart. In Door County vaccine is being administered to nursing homes and assisted living places. Currently, eligibility for vaccination in Wisconsin are people in Skilled Nursing & Assisted Living Facilities, front line health care workers, police, fire, correctional staff, and people >65 years of age. At the present time 1,070,199 doses have been administered. In Door County there are 3 options for receiving vaccine; Public Health, Door County Medical Center, and Walgreens. Sign up can be done through their respective websites. It has been frustrating since demand is far greater than current availability. At the time of this writing only, Door County

Medical Center dcmcdical.org is taking names for registration. As more vaccine becomes available, Walgreens and Public Health will resume scheduling. Presently 5,371 or 19.4% of Door County residents have received at least 1 dose of the vaccine. This represents 46.2% of residents >65 years of age. Other vaccines are about to be approved which will increase the supply to meet the demand.

So what does this mean as far as reopening. My personal feeling is we need to be patient. We need to follow vaccinations being given and the role that variants are playing for the next few weeks. Our virus activity is decreasing, but still remains high. If we can continue to decrease activity levels and increase the number of vaccinations, we will be in better shape to consider starting a phased-in opening. If on the other hand the variants become more of an issue and cause a spike in cases, it would be too risky to open up. In either case public health measures such as wearing masks, social distancing, and good hand washing will remain the most important step to open up safely. Even after we receive the vaccine we have to continue follow these practices. We have come too far at too great a cost to risk becoming the start of a new surge. I believe that what we do in the next few weeks will be a major factor in our success or failure to deal with this pandemic. Finally if you are having difficulty getting registered for the vaccine, please contact our church office. We will help you get it done. We can get through this together.

God Bless!

Rod Krueger