

WHEN IN A PANDEMIC.....

As you have probably seen, we have been using Zoom a lot for group get togethers, most notably Book Clubs. And as you also have probably noticed, this pandemic is not going away anytime soon. In addition, if you haven't noticed, the winters can be quite wicked here and meeting cancellations have been made in the past. AND if you are a snowbird, you are lost to our branch until you return. So, in that light, going online may be the answer for some of us. For those of you who are unaccustomed to this way of communication, here is a small tutorial.

First of all, it's free. Yes, some versions do cost money, but the version that we have been using is free. It limits group calls to 40 minutes, but you can easily add another 40 minutes. Most of the Book Clubs have scheduled two conferences. You don't have to worry about it, the person managing the meeting will add the time and instruct you as to how you can join.

Second of all, you need to register for the service. You can do this either on your computer or on your phone. If using your computer, make sure it has a camera (my laptop does but I had to add one to my desktop). To register go to: <https://zoom.us/signup> You may be asked your age. That is because Zoom is not allowed for anyone under 16 (unless it's through school). Follow the steps to register.

If you are joining a meeting, a URL will be sent to you via e-mail (which you entered during your registration). The e-mail will also include the date and time for the meeting. When that date and time are near, hit the URL and it will take you to the meeting. You will need to press a button that says join meeting and you will need to make sure that your mic and video are on. Sometimes, this is put into your Google calendar, if you have one.

There are a few tips that I have found in using the app.

- I found a place in my house that is not too cluttered as a backdrop. Remember that people will not only be seeing you, but your house. I see that there are some free backdrops available as well. Some are pretty funny.
- If you are not talking, mute your mic. For some reason, it helps to be able to hear the person speaking.
- If you are having trouble hearing or people are having trouble hearing you; use a headset. I have a set that came with my phone and works well on my laptop. I haven't found a way to use it on my desktop yet though.

I am sure that other members have tips as well.

We have been using Zoom this past spring. In addition to Zoom; there are many other ways to videoconference:

- Google Meet (if you use captioning, this is the way to go)
- FaceTime (on Apple products)
- Microsoft Teams
- Skype
- WhatsApp

If confused, please contact a board member and they should be able to find someone to help you out.