We started by revisiting the homework: we tried to place our attention on the “pre-formal” during the week. This meant to let go of any particular “form” in the result and to focus on the “what for,” the reasons for anything we do. A few of us reframed this to be something like “love.” Several reported that it was easier to do initially (the first week was easier than the second week) or that it was easier to do with anonymous individuals as opposed to our family or loved ones. Roger suggested a metaphor for this. This metaphor may be a bit difficult because it enters in to the realm of religion and sin and inner work, but I have found it immensely helpful so I will attempt to explain it here (of course, as always, this is my interpretation).

Our Soul is like a crystal bowl with beautiful writing carved on the rim. The writing is the logos (“through which all things are made, as divine” – wikipedia). I imagine this crystal bowl as beautiful when it is clean and the light of our life shines through it, but as life happens to and through us we “miss the mark” (sin) many times over. As this happens the bowl begins to get filled with gack that inhibits the ability of the bowl to reproduce or create beautiful forms of our light. This happens over and over in life. Whether it is things that happen to us or ways in which we fall short. The bowl is filled. The older “sins” have been there for a long time and are almost solidified in the bottom of the bowl. The newer ones (or less offensive) are liquid on top of the solid and the newest or easiest are on top of the liquid in the form of gas. So as we begin to turn our attention to these things in the bowl, the first type we encounter are the gaseous ones. These are somewhat easy to disperse they may ignite and burn away with the smallest of ignition. As these things are cleared away we see the fruit of our work. We feel lighter and hopeful, but then we must again turn to the “sin” and the next layer is harder to disperse. It requires more work, more attention and tenacity. This is why the initial work is easier than the later work.

Next we talk a bit about why we have an offense. Roger suggested it is because we are attached to a particular form of the outcome. Forgiveness is a return to wholeness to a place prior to the violation of expectation. Sometimes you can’t forgive, but it doesn’t seem that forgiveness is something we can do, but it is something that happens. And as we move through forgiveness we see that the primary object of our forgiveness is ourselves. We see that we are not forgiving ourselves for being a certain way (an expectation of how we should be) or doing a certain thing (an expectation of what our actions should be).

It is fascinating to me to consider what it might be like to have no expectation (no plan) of an interaction and to just, in the moment of the encounter, to continually ask myself, “what is the loving thing to do in this moment?” How different might this be from how I usually am in the world? This would include this kind of loving disposition to myself. For instance, what might it be like when I feel like screaming and stamping my feel to have “wonderful delight in the four-year-old like reaction to life.”

We discussed the model to the right that describes human interactions. The first place we enter with each other is in the polite mode. As conflict arises we move to a place of recognizing the differences. From there it would be ideal to move to a place of inquiry, curiosity regarding the other’s position. This allow the “epiphany” to immerse.

The last model we discussed is shown here. It begins with naming of a conflict. After naming it you have a choice to either engage or by-pass. We spent a while (well at least I did) thinking about the choice to by-pass or engage. We talked about how some people are more willing or able to engage and how there is also a manipulative quality possible with either choice. The desire to engage maybe just a desire to convince someone of your point of view, to achieve some particular form or result. The same might be true when we choose to by-pass. Either way the necessary ingredient is the release of the desire for a particular form or outcome.

It seems we came full circle today.