Practice 1.3, from Steven Chase, *Nature as Spiritual Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 9-10.

**Consolation, Grief, and Loss**

**Intention:** The intention of this practice is to recover in your memory places in nature you have gone for consolation and to return there or find new places in the natural world that comfort you.

**Practice:** There are two aspects of this practice that are important to notice: (1) where you go when you feel pain, suffering, or loss; (2) noticing what about nature has the ability to “consume” grief, bringing comfort, calm, equilibrium, and peace.

* Recall places or a place in nature where in the past you have gone when you were feeling sadness or grief. If you can’t think of a particular place, recall the last few times you were sad, then think back, remembering places you went during that time.
* As you look back, is there a particular landscape or part of creation that comforts you during times of grief and loss? What is the most consoling environment you have experienced?
* What is it about a particular place that attracts you when you are sad, in mourning, or hurting? Simply recall places you have been with nature in sadness, Recall what you were doing at the time: walking, sitting, running, writing, kayaking, crying, photographing. Again, what part of your grief was absorbed by this place in nature?
* If you can, return to this place, if it is near. What does it feel like to you now, and what do you notice about it?
* We all suffer grief or loss, more so at certain periods in our lives, less at other times. Consciously seek a place in nature that soothes and comforts you. You may find yourself on a bench in a city park, or aggressively chopping wood, or gathering blackberries, or sitting on a beach.
* Notice how nature “sits” with you as it consoles and comforts. How is nature an active partner in consolation? Nature may calm; it may help put into perspective a particular sorrow; its very “isness,” or presence, may redirect sorrow in a healing direction. Let yourself absorb this healing. How did – or does – nature bring solace? How would you describe or communicate it?
* How can you be present to another person in the way nature has been present to you in sorrow? How can you be present to nature in the same way?