



*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. This is the first and greatest commandment.*

There is one simple thing we can do to grow closer to God: orient ourselves fully to God. Orient our hearts. Orient our souls. Orient our being. Moses received this commandment long ago, and Jesus reminded us of it when he named it as the greatest commandment. As we consider how to grow closer to God as stewards of God's world, we start again with the simple practice of finding our "true north." How do we orient our hearts, souls, and beings to God?

Jews have oriented themselves to God with this commandment for centuries. We hear this command in Deuteronomy, where it is followed by the clear direction to "teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise in the morning."

Because this commandment to love God with our full selves has been so important, Jews have long attached it to their front doors in a tiny scroll, called a mezuzah. As they see or touch it coming in and out of their homes, they are reminded to love God with their heart, soul and being and to teach this to their children.

For Christians, each time we make the sign of the cross, touching the top of our foreheads to below our hearts and from shoulder to shoulder, we orientate ourselves fully to God. In making the sign of the cross we embody the truth that we are united to the death and resurrection of Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God—that is God's promise to us made on the cross. When we cross ourselves before praying, we put God first, blessing the time to keep company with God. When we cross ourselves before eating, we put God first, blessing God for sustaining us from his bounty. When we cross ourselves as we enter church, we put God first, recognizing that we offer to God praise not only with our lips, but our lives. Stewardship is first and foremost a practice of orienting to God, putting God first.

Our spiritual ancestors taught us that the practice of the tithe is a tangible way to put God first, to love God with all our heart, body, mind, and strength. We give not to earn God's love, as there is nothing we can do to earn it. We give simply out of response to God's love, recognizing that when we put God first, our lives are blessed. Giving helps us to find our true North.



**Jennifer R. Kitt**  
*Member, The Church of the Epiphany  
The Episcopal Diocese of California*

### *Reflection Questions*

- What are the challenges of putting God first?
- How does proportional giving help you to put God first?
- What does loving God with your whole heart look like for you?