

# People

News in the [September 7, 2010](#) issue

**Peter Lee**, a former Episcopal bishop of Virginia, has accepted a post as interim dean of New York's General Theological Seminary. The appointment was announced on August 9, the same day that officials of the Episcopal Church's oldest seminary said that they had signed documents finalizing a \$5.3 million short-term loan to provide working capital for this school year. Proceeds from the sale of four residential units will repay the loan and are expected to reduce the seminary's debt by as much as \$3.9 million. The residences must be sold within one year's time, cautioned interim GTS president Lang Lowrey. But securing the service of Bishop Lee, who now serves San Francisco's Grace Cathedral as interim dean, was seen as vital to the school's economic recovery. Lee led the Diocese of Virginia, the church's largest with over 180 congregations, for a quarter century and has held key governing and financial positions in the Episcopal Church.

Drew University has named **Kah-Jin Jeffrey Kuan** as the new dean of Drew's Theological School in Madison, New Jersey, effective in January. Kuan will be the first Asian-American to serve as dean at United Methodist seminary. He has served on the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry since 2004. Kuan has been teaching at the Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

**Robert Aitken**, a prolific author, social justice activist and pioneer in bringing Zen Buddhism to the West, died August 5 at age 93. Born in Philadelphia, Aitken was introduced to Buddhism while imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp during World War II. Aitken had been working as a civilian in Guam when he was captured. After reading about Buddhism, Aitken later wrote, "I was absurdly happy despite our miserable circumstances." After the war, Aitken studied with Japanese Zen masters in the U.S. and Japan. He was ordained in 1974, becoming one of the first Americans to earn the Zen honorific "roshi," which means *master* or *teacher*. Aitken was perhaps most influential through his 13 books on Buddhism—he was working on a 14th when he died—and his insistence that Buddhists be socially engaged, which some saw as a controversial break with traditional Zen practices. In 1978, Aitken cofounded the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, a nonsectarian group with 18 chapters in

the U.S.