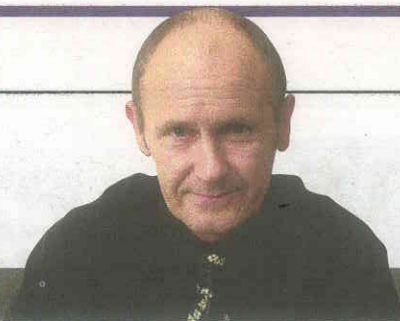


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John's project continues to have an impact in Bethlehem

His memory is cherished, not just in Norwich and Norfolk, but also in the Holy Land where he is still making a difference – almost 10 years after his death.

Young people in a tough refugee camp in Bethlehem are now being given the chance of an education thanks to the John Aves Educational Project (JAEP) – set up in memory of the charismatic and colourful Norwich vicar who died while working in Bethlehem almost 10 years ago.

He was aged 52.

Since his death his wife Anne, sons Ben and Edmund, and a group of others including the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James, have been developing the project – a unique and fitting memorial to a popular man who dedicated his life to helping others.

Canon Dr John Aves grew up in a farming family on the Norfolk and Suffolk borders and decided to become a priest when aged just 14.

He was a chaplain at Brixton Prison, curate at St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, and Rector of Attleborough, before becoming priest in charge of St Giles in Norwich.

John had been working and living with Palestinians in the Dheisheh Refugee Camp when he collapsed and died of a heart attack, just before he was due to return to Norwich in 2004.



But his name and his memory live on...

Bahaa Milhem was the first student to come to Norwich and now young people at the camp are now able to study at university in Jerusalem thanks to the project. For them it is a dream come true.

"John was one of those clergy who bishops treasure," said the Bishop of Norwich.

"Loved by the people of his parish, he had an infectious joy about him which attracted people to the Christian faith. He also had immense curiosity. He wanted to know how other people lived," he added.

"That is what led him to spend the last three months of his life in the Holy Land. Not that we expected it to be the last three months of his life.

"He went on a special programme but found he wasn't getting close enough to the Palestinian people. He



ended up living in a refugee camp and in an astonishing short period of time became their honoured guest and confidante," said Bishop Graham.

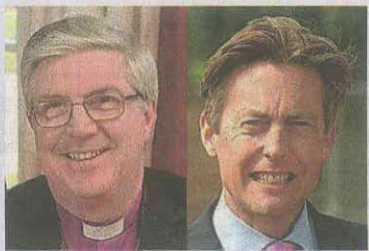
"The John Aves Educational Project is more than just a memorial to a remarkable priest. "It builds on what happened in the last three months of John's life and is a testimony to his passion for education," he said.

■ Canon Dr John Aves and scenes from the Dheisheh Refugee Camp

Bishop and MP to address special meeting

The work of the project and the way forward for the troubled Middle East will be the subject of a gathering in Norwich on June 7 at the Bishop's House at St Martin-at-Palace Plain, Norwich. All tickets have been sold.

The speakers will be the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James, left, and former Evening News and Eastern Daily Press journalist, turned MP, Ben Bradshaw, right.



Ben went to Thorpe Grammar School, and his father was a Canon and Vice-Dean at Norwich

Cathedral. He went on to work for the BBC before becoming Labour MP for Exeter in 1997.

He has held various government posts including being an under-secretary of state at the Foreign Office, when he spoke to Parliament on the situation in the Middle East.

For more information about the John Aves Educational Project visit www.jaep.org.uk

■ Bahaa Milhem pictured in 2009 beginning course at City College Norwich with Canon Aves' widow, Anne. Picture: DENISE BRADLEY

