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Educational legacy which means John's caring work will live on

Ten years ago a Norwich priest, described by one of his parishioners as like a firework, full of energy and spark, collapsed and died while walking on Star Street in Bethlehem ten days before he was due to return home to family and friends.

His name was John Aves and at the time of his death he was working at Dheisheh refugee camp in Palestine. He was 52 and he left a wife Anne,

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two sons, Ben and Edmund, and thousands of friends in Norwich, Norfolk, Suffolk and across this country and abroad.

Back in 2004 there was a deep sense of shock and despair following the news of his death. Such a terrible waste. John had so much more to give but now, a decade on, his memory lives on and will never be forgotten, especially by some young people in Palestine who now have an education, thanks to him.

The memory of the man they knew and loved as “Father John” gets stronger as the years go by and that is down to the determination and courage of his wife, sons and their supporters.

If they hadn't realised the impact



■ Anne Aves with Jayne and Maysa, students at Bethlehem University benefiting from funds raised in memory of her husband Canon John Aves.

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this bold and boisterous vicar had in such a trouble-torn part of the world, it was when Anne and her sons visited Palestine after his death. One man waiting to welcome them was Yassar Arafat.

“We were told he wanted to meet us to award John a posthumous medal for his services to peace and we had a private audience with him,” said Anne.

It took her and her sons and friends two years to work out just what to do in John's memory. “We knew from the start...it had to be a

living memorial. He wouldn't have wanted a statue or anything like that,” she explained.

This had to be something to help young people – give them hope, give them a future and that comes via an education.

The first student from the refugee camp to be given an education in Norwich was Bahaa Milhem. He studied at the City College and his life has changed beyond his wildest dreams.

Since then the John Aves Educational Project has made it possible for many more students from Dheisheh to receive a university education in their homeland. An achievement John

Who was John Aves?

To give him his full title he was the Reverend Canon Dr John Aves, priest in charge of St Giles, Norwich, honorary canon of Norwich Cathedral and diocesan director of continuing ministerial education.

To my wife Bridgette and I he was just cousin John. A good friend. Full of fun, hope and passion.

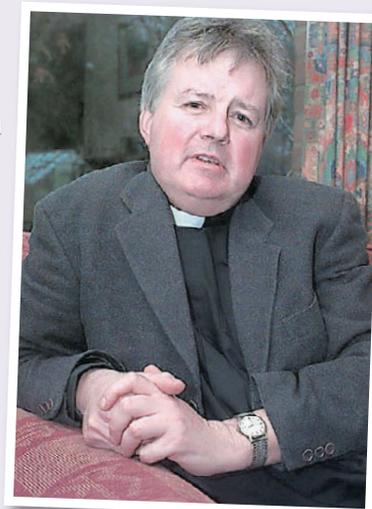
Bridgette and John were members of the Aves family, farmers and builders from around the Hinderclay and Redgrave areas of Suffolk.

It wasn't easy for John to follow his calling into the ministry. He needed his sense of humour. I remember him as a chubby boy with a twinkle in his eye.

His career took him to St Peter Mancroft, Brixton Prison and Attleborough before he returned to the city, this time at St Giles.

He was a man so many people turned to when they needed help or advice. A good talker and a great listener.

When we attended services at St Giles



he would give me a good sprinkling of “holy water” as he passed by. He enjoyed that. Mention the name John Aves to anyone whom he met and you will be rewarded with a smile.

would have been so proud of...and the work still goes on.

A highlight last year was a garden party and fundraising event hosted by the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James, and attended by MP Ben Bradshaw.

“I would like to thank everyone

who supports our work and we are looking forward to the future,” said Anne, who returned to the region recently to spend some time with the tutors at Al Quds and Bethlehem University and meet the students being sponsored by JAEP which has now raised more than £56,000.



■ Left, Anne with Baha Milhem a Palestinian refugee. Above, Fadi, a student at Al Quds University, with Anne.

