

## **FROM THE COWLEY ROAD TO AFGHANISTAN**

Susan Clarkson, who spoke to the Faringdon Peace Group in May, is a truly remarkable woman. She lives as part of the Catholic Worker community in St. Francis House in Oxford which gives hospitality to the poor and vulnerable, often asylum seekers. She has spent her life working for peace and social justice enduring numerous arrests with 10 days in prison and, despite being a pensioner and visually impaired, she has recently spent 2 weeks in Afghanistan with 'Afghan Peace Volunteers' (APV). This is a community of 16 young people from different ethnic groups in Afghanistan who are committed to a life of non-violence in a very violent, war torn country. They have built a peace garden and run classes in the afternoon for local boys and girls from different ethnic groups as well as a women's sewing group. The women make duvets to distribute to the poor and also scarves to sell to raise funds. Susan brought some scarves with her – blue, because the blue sky covers us all, and still smelling of wood smoke from the stove in the centre of the room where they meet. Susan learnt a lot about the effects of war during her visit – everyone she met had lost someone. Sadly, the young APV men who were working so hard for peace fully expected to die in the violence that they believe will inevitably follow the withdrawal of foreign troops. The women challenged Susan as to the benefit of her visit as nothing changes – they still have bombs, terrorism and the Taliban and live in constant fear for their children and of not finding enough to eat. Susan could only promise to come back and tell their stories, so that more people know what is going on there and continue to campaign against drone attacks and lobby the government to work for peace in Afghanistan.

To find out more about their work see [www.ourjourneytosmile.com](http://www.ourjourneytosmile.com)

All are welcome to FPG meetings which take place at 8.00pm. on the first Weds of the month at the Friends Meeting House, Lechlade Rd.

June's meeting is with a local woman who has recently returned from a 3 month stay in Palestine as part of the ecumenical accompaniment programme.