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Should Abortion Be Prevented?

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Frances Kissling, co-founder of the Global Fund for Women, and current president of Catholics for a Free Choice, published this article in the current issue of Conscience.

If abortion is a morally neutral act and does not endanger women's health, why bother to prevent the need for it? After all, the cost of a first-trimester abortion is comparable to the cost of a year's supply of birth control pills—and abortion has fewer complications and less medical risk for women than some of the most effective methods of contraception. This question has plagued advocates of choice since abortion was legalized. It has intensified in the face of antiabortion moralism about sex and responsibility, in the continued stigmatization of women who have abortions and in the increasingly expressed mantra that "there are simply too many abortions in the U.S." Frustration has led some advocates of legal abortion to dig in their heels and insist that any talk about preventing abortions denigrates women as moral decision-makers, misunderstands the reasons women have abortions, retreats from principled support for the right of women to choose abortion without government interference and tacitly lends credence to the contention that abortion is almost always morally wrong. At the evidence level, some worry that the emphasis on

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Our Founders

"I'm a person who had a dream and was lucky enough to make that dream a reality—a dream of a worldwide network of women who would be both givers and receivers. A dream of an organization that would be open, curious, inclusive and trusting. A generous organization, that would work evenhandedly with women's groups around the world, with donors and volunteers, with staff and with others who joined our path.

I came to believe in my nine years creating the Global Fund that it is vital to transform the world by changing the way people treat each other, and by modeling that kind of change behavior ourselves. We can count the achievement—the number of grants and donors, the amount of money raised—but I truly believe that the way we have done our work has been as important as what we have done."

Frances Kissling, Co-Founder

Frances Kissling is the former president of Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC), an independent nonprofit organization that is engaged in research, policy analysis, education and advocacy on issues of gender equality and reproductive health. Working in the Catholic social justice tradition, CFFC is affiliated with Catholic Organizations for Renewal and the Women-Church Convergence, both based in the United States, and with the European Network/Church on the Move.