It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Sinai Temple member Nancy Abelmann.

Nancy Abelmann, 56, of Urbana passed away on Wednesday, January 6, 2016, at her home, surrounded by her loving family.

Nancy was the Harry E. Preble Professor of Anthropology, Asian American Studies, and East Asian Languages Cultures at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She co-founded the Ethnography of the University Initiative (EUI) in 2002; served as the Director of the Center for East Asian and Pacific Studies from 2005 to 2008; and, since 2009, was the Associate Vice Chancellor for Research - Humanities, Arts, and Related Fields.

Nancy was an anthropologist of Korea and of Korean America. Her publications addressing themes of class, education, migration, and social mobility established her as a leading scholar in Anthropology, Asian American Studies, and Korean Studies. She was a deeply committed educator and mentor, and her work on the internationalization of the contemporary university—much of that done at the University of Illinois—connected her scholarship quite directly to the institution and students she served so well.

Daughter of Dr. Walter H. Abelmann and Rena W. Abelmann, Nancy was born in Boston in 1959 and grew up in Lexington, MA. At Harvard University, she majored in East Asian Studies; her graduate studies were at the University of California-Berkeley, where she earned her PhD in anthropology.

Nancy was the most generous of scholars. Her intellectual rigor, integrity, and enthusiasm enriched the lives and work of those who were fortunate to have her as a colleague, collaborator, mentor, and teacher.

Nancy treasured her friendships, so many of which spanned the
globe and lasted a lifetime. Nancy had a vast network of correspondents, both professionally and personally, as the nearly 400 handwritten holiday letters that she sent every year attest.

Nancy's family was precious to her. Her twin daughters, Carmen and Simone, and son Isaac, were the greatest joys in her life. Nancy loved planning family trips all over the world, but regardless of the destination, their activities always included the outdoors—biking, hiking—and visiting art museums. And when they were home, Friday nights were spent together enjoying Nancy's wonderful cooking and watching movies.

Nancy loved the ocean and swimming was one of her favorite activities.

Nancy was preceded in death by her father. She is survived by her mother, Rena Abelmann; her husband of 19 years, Andrew Gewirth; three children, Carmen, Simone, and Isaac; brothers, Arthur Abelmann of Laconia NH, and Charles Abelmann of Washington DC; and sisters Karen Gross of Washington DC, and Ruth Abelmann of Durham, NH; and many nieces and nephews who adored her.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be directed to: University of Illinois Foundation/Nancy Abelmann Scholarship Fund, 1305 W. Green Street, Urbana, IL 61801.

May the memory of Nancy Abelmann continue to be a blessing.