Good afternoon residents, staff and friends.

Today we celebrate the 170th anniversary of the founding of the San Francisco Ladies Protection and Relief Society.

Let us go back to the beginning.

A story of good luck, courage and kindness.

In 1853, San Francisco consisted of a small settlement of square whitewashed “portable houses”.

Looking out from the window of one of these makeshift homes on Second Street near Minna Street, was Mrs A B Eaton.

She was startled to see a bareheaded and breathless girl climbing the wooden steps to her house.

Mrs Eaton opened the door and listened while the sobbing stranger poured out her sad story.

The girl had arrived in San Francisco that afternoon

- after a four months journey around Cape Horn

She expected to ﬁnd her brother on the dock.

But neither the brother nor any emissary was there.

Maybe he was dead, or off in the mines.

Maybe he had never received the letter she sent.

Asking for help at the dockside, a ship’s acquaintance had directed her to a place nearby.

But the girl took one look at the rouge on the cheeks of the woman who answered the door.

The girl knew immediately that this was no place for a lady.

She had nowhere to stay and no one to turn to for help.

Alone and friendless, she wandered the streets in mounting panic.

Then, luckily, she noticed a woman observing her from the window of her home.

It was Mrs Eaton’s friendly face that gave the girl the courage to ask for help.

She asked Mrs Eaton to give her protection until they could trace her brother

The girl had come to the right place - a place of kindness.

Mrs Eaton’s husband, was a major in the Army - stationed in the Presidio.

They were was a members of Howard Presbyterian Church

In Happy Valley between Mission, Market, First and Second Streets.

This was also the home of their pastor, Dr Samuel Willey.

Dr Willey listened sympathetically to Mrs. Eaton’s young guest.

He had a similar experience.

He befriended a New York girl who had crossed the Isthmus of Panama following her brother.

The brother planned to open a store in San Francisco but had got sick.

He wrote home telling of his illness.

His sister had come to California. She hoped to nurse her brother back to health

But she arrived in San Francisco just in time to see him die.

The minister agreed that attention must be paid to women stranded in this city.

The city with all with its gambling dens, saloons and prostitutes was not a safe place for a single woman.

Thus it was that on August 4, 1853 Mrs Eaton gathered a group of women of her church, and from First Presbyterian, First Baptist and First Congregational.

They met with women of Trinity Episcopal in their church on Pine Street between Montgomery and Kearny.

The outgrowth of that meeting was the constitution of the Ladies Protection and Relief Society.

Its object

"to render protection and assistance to strangers, to sick and dependent women and children.”

Within a year, the group had decided to open a home for "all respectable women in want of protection, employment in families or as needlewomen.”

In the ensuing 170 years many changes in the operation of the Society occurred.

Now in the 21st century, the Society faces a new set of challenges.

The current operations are burdened with uncertainty.

The society must find new ways to serve the community.

This is what the strategic plan is all about

Fingers crossed:

The Society once again finds the luck, the courage and the wisdom to continue to serve the San Francisco community for a further 170 years.