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## MARKET REVIEW

Global equities rose in November. Donald Trump's presidential reelection and the Republican Party's sweep of both chambers of Congress led the US to significantly outperform other regions amid expectations for deregulation, additional tax cuts, and a more accommodative US business environment. The breadth of change anticipated from the new US administration reverberated across the globe with far-reaching implications for foreign policy, trade dynamics, inflation, and economic growth. Elon Musk's appointment to the newly formed US Department of Government Efficiency extended a strong risk appetite in markets. Prospects for a soft landing appeared to remain intact, and central banks in the US, UK, New Zealand, Mexico, and Sweden continued to lower interest rates. Inflation neared central bank targets in many regions. However, in November, a key measure of US inflation rose for the first time since March, and UK inflation surged to its highest level in six months, highlighting the ongoing sensitivity of prices to economic changes. Eurozone business activity sank to a 10-month low, while Germany's coalition government collapsed, and the country's manufacturing sector remained mired in a deep downturn. In France, Prime Minister Michel Barnier's Cabinet confronted a possible vote of no confidence. A stronger US dollar pressured emerging markets, and Chinese equities declined amid limited government aid and low consumer demand. Geopolitical risks remained heightened, while the US and France brokered a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hezbollah.

## FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The fund delivered positive returns over the period.
- Information technology and financials were the top contributing sectors, while consumer discretionary was the bottom contributing sector.
- At the issuer level, our top two absolute contributors were Shopify and BILL Holdings, while our top two absolute detractors were Trupanion and Adyen.
- Shopify is a cloud-based e-commerce platform for online stores and retail point-of-sales systems. The share price rose in November after management announced strong 2Q24 results and issued guidance that exceeded expectations. Strength in the international merchants segment fueled revenue growth as the company continued to capture market share. Shares of pet insurance provider Trupanion declined over the period after the company reported third-quarter results, including operating earnings per share that missed estimates. Trupanion also reported a decrease in total pets enrolled compared to the previous quarter year-over-year.

## FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

FinTech equities rose in November, outperforming the broader market. 3Q24 earnings results for banks, payment companies, and financial software providers have been stronger than anticipated and results have provided investors optimism that both consumer and enterprise IT spending will improve as we head into 2025. Several companies have cited green shoots of recovery in SMB (small and medium-sized business) markets as well, which had been an overhang in 1H24.

Additionally, banks and financial services providers rallied after the US elections as investors believe a second Trump presidency may bring lower corporate taxes and reduced regulation, increasing capital markets activity and banks' willingness to spend on financial technology upgrades (a clear positive for fintech providers). A resilient US economy and increased consumer confidence has given investors comfort that a more benign rate environment will persist at least over the intermediate term, despite potential impacts of the Trump administration's tariff or immigration policies. Moving past the election also removes an overhang of uncertainty and gives investors more confidence on the direction of the economic path forward.

Since July, we have seen a broadening out of market performance drivers driven in part by points 1 and 2 above. The crowding out impact of "AI Winners" and the leading mega caps has waned, and investors have come back to small caps and other secular growth themes such as fintech. Historically, our portfolio has performed well during periods of economic optimism, a more benign regulatory environment, and improved market breadth like we are seeing now.

Over the intermediate term, our outlook for the FinTech industry remains optimistic. While AI investments are delaying decision making when it comes to technology upgrades at leading financial services providers, we believe the industry is well positioned to continue to ramp up and capitalize on AI products and applications at both the consumer and enterprise level and see continued opportunity for massive productivity and efficiency gains through utilization of this technology.

At the end of the period, our largest overweights were financials and industrials. We were most underweight to health care, communication services and consumer staples, all of which we had no exposure to. From a regional perspective, our largest overweight was North America and we were most underweight to Emerging Markets, which we had no exposure to.

## PAST PERFORMANCE DOES NOT PREDICT FUTURE RETURNS. AN INVESTMENT CAN LOSE VALUE.

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