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## MARKET REVIEW

- In October, broadly encouraging economic releases contributed to rising sovereign yields, against the backdrop of political uncertainty stemming from the US elections and intensifying tension in the Middle East. Most fixed income sectors outperformed duration-equivalent government bonds.
- Global sovereign bond yields moved higher across major developed economies, reversing the downward trajectory from August and September. Signs of resilient US labor market, resurgent oil prices on fears of an escalating Middle East conflict, and the prospect of a prolonged US port strike raised concerns about revived inflationary pressures, resulting in markets pricing in fewer rate cuts by the Fed. Likewise, German bund yields climbed while eurozone GDP surprised to the upside in the third quarter and October inflation rose to higher-than-expected levels, weakening the case for jumbo rate cuts by the ECB. In the UK, Chancellor Rachel Reeves's budget announcement sent gilt yields close to their highest level since the 2008 global financial crisis.
- Global credit markets outperformed duration-equivalent government bonds over the month as spreads tightened. All three major sectors – financials, industrials, and utilities – generated positive excess returns. Broadly, municipal bonds outperformed duration-equivalent Treasuries. Within the securitized sectors, commercial mortgage-backed securities and asset-backed securities outperformed, while agency mortgage-backed securities underperformed duration-equivalent government bonds, respectively.

## FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The portfolio generated a negative total return during the month and underperformed the Bloomberg Global Aggregate hedged to USD index.
- The portfolio's corporate credit positioning had a positive impact on performance overall. At the broad sector level both high yield credit and US investment grade corporates outperformed duration-equivalent government bonds. Positioning within high yield credit had a positive impact on performance, as did an overweight to non-US investment grade credit, particularly financials. This positive impact was partially offset by negative results from an underweight to US investment grade corporates. An allocation to emerging markets high yield corporates, particularly industrials invested in the Alternatives Energy and Digital Divide themes, aided relative results.
- An overweight to agency mortgage back securities in support of the Affordable Housing theme hurt results, impacted by higher US Treasury yields and uncertainty around US elections.
- An allocation to taxable municipals, primarily allotted to Education & Training and Health themes, had a positive impact on results.
- Overall duration and yield curve positioning was the main detractor from performance over the month. The portfolio was positioned overweight duration during the month.

## FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

- We believe that a soft-landing scenario will likely unfold for the US economy as the wealth boost supports consumer spending and offsets a weaker employment backdrop. In our view, inflation should continue to moderate though structural drivers of inflation will challenge the Fed's ability to bring inflation down to its target.
- We anticipate market volatility on the run up to November's US election, which in turn creates a wealth of opportunity for active fixed income investing. Markets often overreact to potential election outcomes, creating opportunities for active duration management and sector rotation.
- Although major global central banks have begun to cut short-term interest rates in 2024, we expect rates to remain higher for longer, contributing to a tightening of financial market liquidity conditions. This tightening of financial conditions will be accelerated by the major global central banks' scheduled balance sheet reductions and the increased issuance of government debt, in turn translating to greater credit spread volatility and increased dispersion in the credit spreads of individual issuers.
- In terms of positioning, the portfolio has a close to neutral credit risk profile, while preserving high-quality liquid instruments to take advantage of future market dislocations.
- From a sector perspective, the portfolio maintains an off-benchmark allocation to select taxable municipals, emphasizing healthcare and education issuers. The portfolio holds select below investment-grade corporates and bank loan issuers that in our view carry attractive credit spreads.
- The portfolio maintains positioning in agency MBS issuers with a focus on supporting housing affordability for low-income borrowers. We continue

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

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to hold select single-asset single borrower CMBS backed by LEED certified buildings.

- The portfolio maintains exposure to labelled use-of-proceeds government and agency bonds intended to fund green, social, and sustainability-related projects.

## RISKS

**BELOW INVESTMENT GRADE:** Lower rated or unrated securities may have a significantly greater risk of default than investment grade securities, can be more volatile, less liquid, and involve higher transaction costs. **CAPITAL:** Investment markets are subject to economic, regulatory, market sentiment and political risks. All investors should consider the risks that may impact their capital, before investing. The value of your investment may become worth more or less than at the time of the original investment. The Fund may experience a high volatility from time to time. **CONCENTRATION:** Concentration of investments within securities, sectors or industries, or geographical regions may impact performance. **CREDIT:** The value of a bond may decline, or the issuer/guarantor may fail to meet payment obligations. Typically lower-rated bonds carry a greater degree of credit risk than higher-rated bonds. **CURRENCY:** The value of the Fund may be affected by changes in currency exchange rates. Unhedged currency risk may subject the Fund to significant volatility. **EMERGING MARKETS:** Emerging markets may be subject to custodial and political risks, and volatility. Investment in foreign currency entails exchange risks. **HEDGING:** Any hedging strategy using derivatives may not achieve a perfect hedge. **INTEREST RATES:** The value of bonds tends to decline as interest rates rise. The change in value is greater for longer term than shorter term bonds. **LEVERAGE:** The use of leverage can provide more market exposure than the money paid or deposited when the transaction is entered into. Losses may therefore exceed the original amount invested. **SUSTAINABILITY:** A Sustainability Risk can be defined as an environmental, social or governance event or condition that, if it occurs, could cause an actual or potential material negative impact on the value of an investment.

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