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MARKET REVIEW

Global equities rose in September. Stocks fell sharply at the beginning of the month after declines in some mega-cap technology stocks and signs of a cooling US economy rippled across the globe and stoked concerns about the state of the global economy. However, stocks rebounded following a sizable 50 basis points interest-rate cut by the US Federal Reserve and a more forceful Chinese stimulus that bolstered market sentiment. Lower energy prices helped to ease inflationary pressures, and resilient labor markets in the US, Europe, and Japan reinforced the view that the global economy could achieve a soft landing. However, some key economic indicators were mixed across many developed nations, with services PMIs remaining in expansionary territory, while manufacturing PMIs continued to show sustained weakness. In China, markets were encouraged by more substantial policy support from the People's Bank of China, which aimed to revitalize the country's economic recovery. Politics garnered greater attention amid a close US presidential race and leadership changes in other countries: Shigeru Ishiba was elected as Japan's prime minister, Michael Barnier became France's prime minister, and Claudia Sheinbaum was sworn in as Mexico's first female president. Geopolitical risks intensified, with escalating conflict in the Middle East threatening to ignite a broader regional war after Israeli forces killed Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah in Beirut.

The MSCI All Country World Index Net returned 2.3% for the month. Within the index, nine out of 11 sectors rose for the period. Consumer discretionary and materials were the top performing sectors, while energy and health care were the bottom performing sectors for the month.

FUND PERFORMANCE AND ATTRIBUTION

- The fund outperformed the index over the period.
- Security selection was a driver of relative outperformance. Strong selection in financials was partially offset by selection in materials, consumer discretionary and information technology. Sector allocation, a result of our bottom-up stock selection process, also contributed to returns. Allocation effect was driven by our lack of exposure to energy, underweight to health care and overweight to utilities, but partially offset by our lack of exposure to communication services. On a market basis, strong stock selection in United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Spain was modestly offset by selection in Switzerland and Singapore.
- At the issuer level, our top two relative contributors were overweights to AIA Group and Deere & Company, while our top two relative detractors were overweights to Edwards Lifesciences and Texas Instruments.
- Shares of AIA Group, an insurance provider, rose during the period, driven by a rally in Chinese stocks, particularly financial stocks. This rally followed China's central bank announcing measures to cut reserve requirements and reduce mortgage rates to support the economy and energize the stock market. These favorable economic policies boosted market optimism. Shares of Edwards Lifesciences declined in September following a presentation at Wells Fargo Healthcare Conference in which management said that 2025 is now expected to be a transition year with EPS down year-over-year.

FUND POSITIONING AND OUTLOOK

At the end of the period, our largest overweights were consumer staples, industrials and financials. We were most underweight to communication services and energy, neither of which we had exposure to. From a regional perspective, our largest overweight was Europe and we were most underweight to North America and Emerging Markets.

RISKS

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. **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. **EQUITIES:** Investments may be volatile and may fluctuate according to market conditions, the performance of individual companies and that of the broader equity market. **HEDGING:** Any hedging strategy using derivatives may not achieve a perfect hedge. **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.

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

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