



#### **FUND INFORMATION**

**Portfolio managers:** Scott Smith, CFA° and Jonathan Terry, CFA°

**Benchmark:** Bloomberg U.S. Credit Bond Index

Fund inception: 15 Dec 2016

**Management approach:** Actively managed

Sustainable Finance Disclosure Regulation: Article 8<sup>†</sup>

<sup>†</sup>Promotes environmental and social characteristics but does not have a sustainable investment objective.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS**

- Seeks total return, maximising investment income whilst preserving capital
- Invests at least two-thirds of its assets in US\$-denominated credit debt securities of investment grade (or equivalent) at the time of purchase
- Invests at least 5% of its assets in green, sustainable, sustainable-linked and social bonds
- Focuses on bottom-up credit research seeking to balance income whilst aiming for a competitive yield to drive total returns
- Favours companies with strong or improving ESG positions and incorporates into its rigorous fundamental analysis
- Uses a negative screen to exclude securities issued by companies based on their exposure to ESG risks
- May invest:
  - One-third of its assets in debt securities rated below investment grade and non US\$-denominated debt securities
  - Up to 20% of its assets in asset-backed securities
  - Using futures/derivatives for hedging, efficient portfolio management or for investment purposes

#### CALENDAR YEAR PERFORMANCE (%)

Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

|   | YTD   | 2023 | 2022   | 2021  | 2020  | 2019  | 2018  | 2017 |
|---|-------|------|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|
| USD Investment Grade<br>Credit Fund - Class I (USD) | 0.00  | 8.00 | -16.08 | -1.46 | 11.33 | 15.20 | -2.46 | 6.88 |
| Bloomberg U.S. Credit<br>Bond Index                 | -0.46 | 8.18 | -15.26 | -1.08 | 9.35  | 13.80 | -2.11 | 6.18 |

Fund performance calculations are net of all applicable fees and are calculated on an NAV-to-NAV basis in US dollars (with income re-invested). Share class inception date: 15 Dec 2016

## **Ouarterly review**

- In the second quarter of 2024, the USD Investment Grade Credit Fund generated a total return of -0.10%, underperforming the Bloomberg US Credit Index by 5 basis points (bps; 100 bps equal 1.00%), which returned -0.05%.
- The constructive macro backdrop paired with elevated demand for the asset class was supportive of tight credit spreads.

### Market review

Credit market conditions remained strong in the second quarter, but demand for the asset class slowed as compared with the torrential pace of the first quarter. Spreads traded in a narrow range and widened 3 bps. Rates moved modestly higher across the curve. The investment-grade yield profile nearly offset the combined effects of wider spreads and higher rates, resulting in only very slight negative total returns.

#### **FUND RISKS**

Debt securities risk
Asset-backed securities risk
High yield securities risk
ESG risk
Contingent convertible bonds risk
Geographic concentration risk
Global investment risk
Leverage risk

Investors should note that, relative to the expectations of the Autorité des Marchés Financiers, this fund presents disproportionate communication on the consideration of non-financial criteria in its investment policy.



### PORTFOLIO POSITIONING

#### PORTFOLIO ATTRIBUTION\* AND STRATEGY

#### Country—neutral

- The fund invests primarily in US-based issuers and maintains an exposure of over 70%. The remaining exposure is allocated to issuers outside of the US, with debt denominated in US dollars.
- We continue to believe having exposure to Yankee/global credit provides solid yield opportunities and diversification benefits for the fund.

#### Currency—neutral

 The fund solely invests in US-dollar-denominated debt. Therefore, currency is not a factor in returns.

#### Sector-neutral

- Credit market conditions ebbed through the quarter and spreads leaked slightly wider. Spread moves were uniform across ratings categories.
- The risk/return profile for the investment-grade credit space remains attractive as corporate fundamentals are intact and total return prospects look constructive following a re-pricing in rate expectations.
- There was some modest dispersion at the sector level. Financials led in performance with +23 bps in excess returns, whilst utilities and industrials lagged at -24 bps and -16 bps, respectively. Some of the best-performing sub-sectors were home construction, finance companies, lodging and metals/mining. Sector effects were neutral to relative returns this quarter.
- Sector effects were neutral as the overweights to financials and industrials largely offset one another.

#### Duration and yield curve—neutral

 US Treasury yields were range-bound throughout the quarter and ended the period higher across the curve. It was essentially a quarter split into two halves. In the first half, robust economic

- data reports coupled with stagnating inflation numbers contributed to a significant re-pricing higher in rates. In the second half, evidence of moderating inflation and economic activity pushed rates lower into quarter-end. The combined developments resulted in a bear steepening of the Treasury curve as front-end moves were less significant than moves in the long end.
- The strategy remains overweight the 3- to 7-year part of the curve and underweight the 10- to 30-year part of the curve. Given expectations of rate cuts in the second half of the year, we believe the intermediate part of the curve offers attractive yield and the potential for attractive total returns. The strategy is also underweight the front-end 0- to 3-year part of the curve. This maturity cohort does not have enough duration to drive significant returns once the curve starts to steepen.
- In terms of duration, the fund is positioned neutral versus the Bloomberg US Credit Index. We continue to believe our ability to be benchmark-aware as opposed to benchmark-centric will benefit the fund's performance as it allows us to adjust positioning accordingly

### Security selection—contributor, detractor or neutral

- Corporate credit issuance totaled US\$406 billion in the second quarter, a notable decrease from the record US\$530 billion in the first quarter. Whilst second quarter new issuance was near recent historical averages, full-year supply estimates remain in line with last year's US\$1.3 trillion. This suggests a much lower issuance pace in the second half of the year.
- Demand for new deals remained strong and most deals were well oversubscribed. This created a dynamic where final pricing had minimal new issue concession, if any. As a result, new issue securities did not produce the same amount of outperformance as in the last two to three quarters. Looking ahead, we expect lighter issuance, which should serve as a tailwind for the asset class and be supportive of spreads around current levels.
- Security selection was muted this quarter, as there were very few significant outperformers and underperformers at the issuer level in the second quarter.

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#### PORTFOLIO CHARACTERISTICS

|                        | FUND  | BLOOMBERG U.S.<br>CREDIT BOND INDEX |
|------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| Avg. eff. duration     | 6.73  | 6.75                                |
| Avg eff maturity (yrs) | 11.86 | 10.78                               |
| Weighted avg. coupon   | 4.07  | 4.23                                |

#### **SECTOR ALLOCATION (%)**

|                        | FUND  | BLOOMBERG U.S.<br>CREDIT BOND INDEX |
|------------------------|-------|-------------------------------------|
| U.S. treasuries        | 6.50  | 0.00                                |
| Cash & equivalents     | 0.44  | 0.00                                |
| Agencies               | 0.00  | 2.58                                |
| Consumer discretionary | 5.56  | 6.30                                |
| Consumer staples       | 8.74  | 13.35                               |
| Government-related     | 0.00  | 2.75                                |
| Energy                 | 1.92  | 6.63                                |
| Financials             | 42.14 | 26.22                               |
| Industrials            | 4.12  | 9.25                                |
| Information technology | 14.36 | 7.88                                |
| Real estate            | 3.96  | 2.30                                |
| Utilities              | 0.30  | 7.41                                |
| Communication services | 11.96 | 7.08                                |
| Sovereign              | 0.00  | 3.54                                |
| Supranational          | 0.00  | 4.72                                |

## CREDIT-QUALITY ALLOCATION (%)1

|                    | FLINID | BLOOMBERG U.S.    |
|--------------------|--------|-------------------|
|                    | FUND   | CREDIT BOND INDEX |
| AAA/Aaa            | 0.00   | 7.13              |
| AA/Aa              | 7.78   | 8.80              |
| A/A                | 38.71  | 40.90             |
| BBB/Baa            | 51.35  | 43.17             |
| BB/Ba              | 1.71   | 0.00              |
| Cash & equivalents | 0.44   | 0.00              |

<sup>1.</sup> The ratings indicated are from Standard & Poor's, Fitch Ratings, and/or Moody's Investors Service. The percentages of the fund's portfolio with the ratings depicted in the chart are calculated based on the total investments of the fund. If a security was rated by all three rating agencies, the median rating was used. If a security was rated by two of the three rating agencies, the lower rating was used. If a security was rated by one of the agencies, that rating was used.

Negative cash percentage and credit-quality allocation greater than 100% is due to unsettled derivative contract positions, which cause the sector/credit weight(s) to increase proportionately to the negative cash amount.

#### **FUND FACTS**

| Inception date               | 15 Dec 2016 |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| Net expense ratio—Inst (USD) | 0.45%       |
| Assets—all share classes     | \$354.13m   |

#### **ANNUALISED PERFORMANCE (%)**

#### Past performance is not indicative of future performance.

|  | 3<br>MONTH | 1<br>YEAR | 3<br>YEAR | 5<br>YEAR | 10<br>YEAR | SINCE<br>FUND<br>INCEPTION<br>(15 DEC<br>2016) |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|--|
| USD Investment<br>Grade Credit Fund          | 0.02       | 4.66      | -3.24     | 0.77      | _          | 2.51   |
| Bloomberg U.S.<br>Credit Bond Index          | -0.05      | 4.42      | -2.94     | 0.54      | _          | _  |
| Morningstar USD<br>Corporate Bond<br>Average |            | 4.07      | -3.51     | 0.18      | 1.88       | _  |

Fund performance calculations are net of all applicable fees and are calculated on an NAV-to-NAV basis in US dollars (with income re-invested). Share class inception date: 15 Dec 2016

## SHARE CLASS INFORMATION (Share class and currency availability varies by jurisdiction)

|                  | INCEPTION<br>DATE | TYPE         | ISIN         | / ti ti to / ti | ONGOING<br>CHARGES/<br>TER (%)* |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Class I<br>(USD) | 2016-12-15        | Accumulating | LU1528096115 | 0.30            | 0.45                            |

<sup>\*</sup>The ongoing charges/total expense ratio (TER) reflects annual total operating expenses for the class, excludes transaction costs and is expressed as a percentage of net asset value. The figure shown is from current KID. The investment manager has committed to reimburse the Sub-Fund when the ongoing charges exceed the agreed upon TER. Ongoing charges may vary over time.



#### **ESG METRICS**

The data provided is for transparency and informational purposes only. The ESG metrics are not indicative of how or whether ESG factors will be utilised by the fund. The information is based on third party ratings and, unless otherwise stated within a fund's investment objective, do not change a fund's investment objective or constrain the fund's investable universe. For more information regarding a fund's investment strategy, please see the fund's prospectus. Refer to allspringglobal.com for further sustainability disclosures.

### **MSCI ESG SCORE**

|                    | FUND  |          | BENCHMA | ARK      |
|--------------------|-------|----------|---------|----------|
|                    | VALUE | COVERAGE | VALUE   | COVERAGE |
| MSCI Overall Score | 6.8   | 98%      | 6.6     | 96%      |

Data is sourced from MSCI ESG Research where companies are rated on a scale of 0-10 (0 - worst, 10 - best). Weighted average scores exclude effects of unrated securities.

#### PRODUCT/ACTIVITY INVOLVEMENT (%)

|                       | FUND |      | BENCHMARK |
|-----------------------|------|------|-----------|
| Controversial Weapons |      | 0.00 | 1.96      |
| Oil Sands             |      | 0.00 | 0.22      |
| Small Arms            |      | 0.00 | 0.00      |
| Thermal Coal          |      | 0.00 | 0.87      |
| Tobacco               |      | 0.00 | 1.02      |
| UNGC violators        |      | 0.00 | 1.35      |

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### SUSTAINALYTICS ESG RISK SCORE

|           | VALUE | COVERAGE |
|-----------|-------|----------|
| Fund      | 21    | 91%      |
| Benchmark | 23    | 87%      |

ESG Risk Ratings measure exposure to and management of ESG risks. Lower risk scores reflect less ESG risk. Sustainalytics ESG Risk Scores measure ESG risks on a scale of 0-100 (0-no ESG Risk, >40 - Severe ESG Risk).

#### **CARBON CHARACTERISTICS**

|  | FUND  |          | BENCHMARK |          |                                |
|--|-------|----------|-----------|----------|--------------------------------|
|  | VALUE | COVERAGE | VALUE     | COVERAGE | % ABOVE/<br>BELOW<br>BENCHMARK |
| Carbon to value<br>invested (metric tons<br>CO2e/\$1MM<br>invested)*             | 36    | 89%      | 78        | 85%      | -54%                           |
| Weighted average<br>carbon intensity<br>(metric tons<br>CO2e/\$1MM<br>revenues)* | 77    | 90%      | 266       | 89%      | -71%                           |

<sup>\*</sup>Carbon emissions includes operational and first-tier supply chain greenhouse gas emissions.

Data sourced from S&P Trucost Limited.



#### **RANKINGS AND RATINGS**

Morningstar total return rankings—Institutional Class (as of 30 Jun 2024)

| MORNINGSTAR CATEGORY | USD CORPORATE BOND |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 year               | 214 out of 397     |
| 3 year               | 172 out of 319     |
| 5 year               | 87 out of 258      |
| 10 year              | N/A                |

#### Overall Morningstar Rating ™



The Overall Morningstar Rating, a weighted average of the 3-, 5-, and 10-year (if applicable) ratings, is out of 319 funds in the USD corporate bond category, based on risk-adjusted returns as of 30 Jun 2024. Ratings and awards are not an indication, promise, or guarantee of future performance. Ratings and awards should not be relied upon when making an investment decision.

#### BENCHMARK DESCRIPTIONS:

The Bloomberg U.S. Credit Bond Index is a broad base, market capitalization-weighted bond market index representing intermediate term investment grade bonds traded in the United States. You cannot invest directly in an index. The Fund uses the Bloomberg U.S. Credit Index for performance comparison. The investments of the Sub-Fund may deviate significantly from the components of and their respective weightings in the benchmark.

The Morningstar Category average is the average return for the peer group based on the returns of each individual fund within the group. The total return of the Morningstar Category average does not include the effect of sales charges. You cannot invest directly in a Morningstar Category average.

Diversification does not ensure or guarantee better performance and cannot eliminate the risk of investment losses

The Morningstar Rating for funds, or star rating, is calculated for managed products (including mutual funds, variable annuity and variable life subaccounts, exchange-traded funds, closed-end funds, and separate accounts) with at least a three-year history. Exchange-traded funds and open-ended mutual funds are considered a single population for comparative purposes. It is calculated based on a Morningstar risk-adjusted return measure that accounts for variation in a managed product's monthly excess performance, placing more emphasis on downward variations and rewarding consistent performance. The Morningstar Rating does not include any adjustment for sales loads. The top 10% of products in each product category receive 5 stars, the next 22.5% receive 4 stars, the next 35% receive 3 stars, the next 22.5% receive 2 stars, and the bottom 10% receive 1 star. The Overall Morningstar Rating for a managed product is derived from a weighted average of the performance figures associated with its 3-, 5-, and 10-year (if applicable) Morningstar Rating metrics. The weights are: 100% 3-year rating for 36-59 months of total returns, 60% 5-year rating/40% 3-year rating for 60-119 months of total returns, and 50% 10-year rating/30% 5-year rating/20% 3-year rating for 120 or more months of total returns. While the 10-year overall star rating formula seems to give the most weight to the 10-year period, the most recent 3-year period actually has the greatest impact because it is included in all three rating

The USD Investment Grade Credit Fund received 3 stars among 319 funds and 3 stars among 258 funds for the 3- and 5-year periods, respectively. The Morningstar Rating is for the Institutional Class only; other classes may have different performance characteristics.

The Morningstar absolute ranking is based on the fund's total return rank relative to all funds that have the same category for the same time period. Morningstar rankings do not include the effect of sales charges. **Past performance is no guarantee of future results.** 

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#### **KEY RISKS**

Debt securities risk: debt securities are subject to credit risk and interest rate risk and are affected by an issuer's ability to make interest payments or repay principal when due. **Asset-backed securities risk:** asset-backed securities may be more sensitive to changes in interest rates and may exhibit added volatility, known as extension risk, and are subject to prepayment risk. High yield securities risk: high yield securities are rated below investment grade, are predominantly speculative, have a much greater risk of default and may be more volatile than higher-rated securities of similar maturity. **ESG risk:** applying an ESG screen for security selection may result in lost opportunity in a security or industry resulting in possible underperformance relative to peers. ESG screens are dependent on third-party data and errors in the data may result in the incorrect inclusion or exclusion of a security. Contingent convertible bonds risk: These instruments can be converted from debt into equity because of the occurrence of certain predetermined trigger events including when the issuer is in crisis resulting in possible price fluctuations and potential liquidity concerns. Geographic concentration risk: investments concentrated in specific geographic regions and markets may be subject to greater volatility due to economic downturns and other factors affecting the specific geographic regions. Global investment risk: securities of certain jurisdictions may experience more rapid and extreme changes in value and may be affected by uncertainties such as international political developments, currency fluctuations and other developments in the laws and regulations of countries in which an investment may be made. Leverage risk: the use of certain types of financial derivative instruments may create leverage which may increase share price volatility.

#### **DEFINITION OF TERMS:**

Credit-quality ratings: Credit-quality ratings apply to underlying holdings of the fund and not the fund itself. Standard & Poor's and Fitch rate the creditworthiness of bonds from AAA (highest) to D (lowest). Standard & Poor's rates the creditworthiness of short-term notes from SP-1 (highest) to SP-3 (lowest). Ratings from A to CCC may be modified by the addition of a plus (+) or minus (-) sign to show relative standing within the rating categories. Moody's rates the creditworthiness of bonds from Aaa (highest) to CC (lowest). Ratings Aa to B may be modified by the addition of a number 1 (highest) to 3 (lowest) to show relative standing within the ratings categories. Moody's rates the creditworthiness of short-term U.S. tax-exempt municipal securities from MIG-1/VMIG-1 (highest) to SG (lowest). Credit quality and credit-quality ratings are subject to change.

**Duration:** Duration is a measurement of the sensitivity of a bond's price to changes in Treasury yields. A fund's duration is the weighted average of duration of the bonds in the portfolio. Duration should be interpreted as the approximate change in a bond's (or fund's) price for a 100-basis-point change in Treasury yields. Duration is based on historical performance and does not represent future results.

**Yield curve:** The yield curve is a graphical representation of fixed-income security yields (usually U.S. Treasuries) at their respective maturities, starting with the shortest time to maturity and sequentially plotting in a line chart to the longest maturity. The yield curve is based on historical performance and does not represent future results.

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