

Dear fellow investors,

The Fortress funds posted negative returns in the third quarter as investments around the world traded lower on renewed interest rate fears. Economic growth in the U.S. was above expectations during the quarter, increasing the chances interest rates stay "higher for longer", and delaying the time when central banks would ease up on the fight against inflation. Economies in Europe and China, meanwhile, continued to see below trend growth and weaker real estate markets, showing that different regions can have very different economic experiences at any given time. The good news recently was that inflation has mostly continued to move lower around the world, though not as quickly or as steadily as had been hoped.

At this exact time last year, there were even bigger concerns about interest rates. The issue then was that inflation hadn't eased off much at all yet, and fear was building that the U.S. Federal Reserve and other central banks might need to push economies into deep recessions to beat it down. That moment also coincided with meaningfully lower prices for stocks and bonds. As these fears faded and inflation indeed moderated, equity markets naturally recovered, and this is why the Fortress funds are all showing nicely positive returns over the past year.

The ups and downs in financial markets tend to settle out over time. Periods of negative returns bring lower prices, and the lower prices in turn mean assets are priced for better returns in the future. Today's prices are what reliably drive that future. Higher interest rates probably won't last forever, but they are right now allowing us to own and invest even more in high-quality assets at reasonable prices, and this suggests better and better returns to come.

As always, we are here to answer any questions you may have. Thank you for investing with us.

Sincerely, Fortress Fund Managers

## OF INTEREST THIS QUARTER:

### THE CARIBBEAN GROWTH FUND

declined 2.8% in the third quarter and is up 7.2% over the past year. Interest rate worries and higher energy prices put pressure on stocks around the world.

### THE CARIBBEAN HIGH INTEREST FUND

declined 0.5% in the third quarter and is up 3.1% over the past year. Stronger economic data suggested interest rates may need to stay "higher for longer".

### THE CARIBBEAN PENSION FUND

shares declined between 0.8% and 2.4% in the third quarter and are up between 3.2% and 6.9% over the past year.

## Keep an eye on the horizon.

Investing and sailing have at least one thing in common: the importance of looking at the horizon rather than only at the water right in front of us. Saving and investing steadily over many years is an important route to financial independence. No one can predict what the conditions will be along the way, but we can stay on course by focussing on the horizon, and our long-term goals.

## Caribbean Growth Fund

### HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Fund declined 2.8% in the third quarter and is up 7.2% over the past year.
- Rising interest rates and higher energy prices pressured equities around the world.

The Fund declined 2.8% in the third quarter and is up 7.2% over the past year. The net asset value (NAV) per share as of September 29 was \$7.0512. Net assets of the Fund were \$610 million, up from \$565 million this time last year. The Fund's annual compound rate of return since inception in 1996 is 7.6% per year. Its portfolio remains well diversified by security, geography, and currency.

Global equities declined during the third quarter as strong economic growth in the U.S. raised fears that interest rates would need to stay "higher for longer" to battle inflation. The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) raised its target rate in July to a range of 5.25-5.5% but kept it unchanged in September. The big change was that it communicated less chance of a rate cut in 2024, which led bond yields to rise – the 10-year treasury yield rose from 3.84% to 4.57% during the quarter. This came as the U.S. economy continued to show resilience and as inflation ticked up in July on the back of rising housing and energy prices. The S&P 500 Index of the largest U.S. companies ended the quarter down 3%, with all sectors except energy declining. International equities felt the effects of weaker economic performance in Europe and China with modestly lower share prices and declines in major currencies. The Chinese government announced new stimulus initiatives during the quarter aimed at boosting the economy and markets, a potentially important change in tone from recent years. Still, emerging markets shares performed in line with other global averages during the quarter. Against this backdrop, the Fund's core global investments via the Fortress Global Funds declined between 4% and 6%.

In the Caribbean, performance was mixed. Jamaica and Trinidad indices were down slightly, while Barbados gained, largely on an increase in FirstCaribbean International Bank which reported improved earnings. In Trinidad, Guardian Holdings gained 6% as quarterly results showed the effects of recent accounting changes moderating. The Fund's holdings in Guyana, meanwhile, continued to decline from the enthusiastic highs seen in 2022, dropping between 2% and 12% this quarter. NCB Financial Group, a small holding for the Fund but a significant stock in the Jamaica market, remained under some pressure as dividend payments did not resume and a secondary equity offering was announced. Higher global interest rates remain a factor for the Caribbean too, especially as many of the largest listed companies are financial institutions.

During the guarter, we added to the Fund's U.S. biotechnology investments as the sector continued to be one of the most attractively valued in the market. We also took partial profits on our U.S. regional bank position as it rallied in July. The outlook from here has its share of challenges: volatile energy prices, high interest rates, and unfortunately, more recently, increased geopolitical risks. The good news is that none of these challenges will last forever, nor will the downward pressure they are currently applying to financial markets. From a long-term perspective, we are pleased to have this opportunity to own and add to high-quality assets at attractive prices.

The Fund continues to be open to all new subscriptions.

#### **EXPENSES**

*Manager:* 1.75% per annum of net assets *Custodian:* 

Custodian: 0.0875% on first \$30M in net assets 0.075% on amounts over \$30M in net assets Administrator: 0.10% on the first \$30M in net assets 0.0875% on amounts over \$30M in net assets Redemption Charge: none Initial Charges: 2% Initial Charges: 2%

## MANAGER & ADMINISTRATOR Fortress Fund Managers Ltd.

**CUSTODIAN** 

AUDITORS

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW



### FUND OBJECTIVE

Capital growth over the long term. The Fund uses a value approach to invest primarily in Caribbean and international equities.

Net Asset Value per share	\$7.0512
Fund Net Assets	\$610,254,879
Fund Inception	Dec 9, 1996

#### **INVESTMENT RETURNS**

	3 Mo	1 Yr	3 Yrs	5 Yrs	Incept.
Fortress	-2.8%	7.2%	7.7%	3.0%	7.6%
Jamaica	-1.8%	-9.9%	-7.6%	-4.4%	5.9%
Trinidad	-0.1%	-9.3%	-2.7%	-0.1%	7.3%
Barbados	4.7%	6.2%	-0.9%	-4.1%	2.8%
MSCI World	-3.4%	21.4%	8.6%	7.8%	7.2%

\*periods longer than 1 year are annual compound returns

#### NAV SINCE INCEPTION TO SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2023



Roger Cave, Chairman Ruth Henry John Howard Greg McConnie Maria Nicholls Tracey Shuffler John Williams

DEALING

## **Caribbean High Interest Fund**

## **HIGHLIGHTS**:

- The Fund declined 0.5% in the third quarter and is up 3.1% over the past year.
- A "higher for longer" outlook on interest rates sent global bond prices lower.

The Fund declined 0.5% in the third quarter and is up 3.1% over the past year. The net asset value (NAV) of the Fund's Accumulation share as of September 29 was \$2.1015, while the Distribution share finished at \$1.0035. Net assets of the Fund were \$140 million, down from \$143 million this time last year. The Fund's annual compound rate of return since inception in 2002 is 3.5% per year. Its portfolio remains as diversified as possible across various issuers, industries, geographies, and terms to maturity.

U.S. bond yields rose to 15-year highs in the third guarter, as U.S. economic data came in stronger than expected and inflation did not keep dropping as steadily as hoped. The 10-year treasury yield rose from 3.84% to 4.57% during the quarter, with prices falling accordingly. The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) raised its target rate 0.25% to a range of 5.25-5.5% in July and then kept it unchanged in September, while dampening hopes of rate cuts in 2024 given the stronger economic data. Corporate bonds remained surprisingly well-supported this quarter, partly because new issuance has been relatively light. Tighter credit spreads helped corporates outperform treasuries, with high yield posting a small gain in what was otherwise a negative period for bonds.

The Fund's core allocation to the US\$ Fortress Fixed Income Fund outperformed its benchmark but still declined nearly 3% in the quarter. Our allocations to specialist managers and emerging market bonds saw similar declines in line with their markets. With global bond yields now at the highest since 2007, the exact trajectory of interest rates remains uncertain. Central banks may eventually continue hiking to fully tame inflation, or - more likely - they may keep rates at their current levels for a time and let inflation run higher than the target or fade slowly. They may also need to cut rates rapidly if the economy weakens. Fortunately, we do not need to predict the future. Higher rates make bonds better value, and we have been gradually increasing the average term to maturity of the Fund's portfolio as yields rise.

In Barbados, the Government of Barbados (GOB) held its first treasury bill auction since 2017 and the Fund participated in a small way. We also added incrementally to longer-term GOB positions, taking the Fund's total GOB exposure up marginally to 13% of the portfolio, as the Series B bond holdings continued to shrink due to scheduled principal repayments. The Fund's portfolio of domestic corporate bonds performed as expected, but unfortunately there have been few new issues to consider adding. Cash in the Fund is 18%, lower this quarter but still higher than desired. The average term to maturity of the Fund's portfolio is just under six years and the gross yield is now 4.5%, a good estimate of its medium-term return potential.

The Fund is currently open only to monthly savings programmes and pensions. It remains closed to new lump sum investments



#### FUND OBJECTIVE

Income and capital preservation over the medium term. The Fund actively invests in a diversified portfolio of primarily Caribbean and international debt securities.

Net Asset Value per share	\$2.1015/ \$1.0035
Fund Net Assets	\$140,015,026
Fund Inception	May 17, 2002

1	INVESTMENT RETURNS					
	3 Months	1 Year	3 Years	5 Years	Inception	
	-0.5%	3.1%	0.8%	1.6%	3.5%	

\*periods longer than 1 year are annual compound returns

#### NAV SINCE INCEPTION TO SEPTEMBER 30TH, 2023



**GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIO** 



Country

Barbados

Barbados

Barbados

International

International

#### Holding

- 1 Fortress Fixed Income Fund
- 2 Deposits CIBC FirstCaribbean Intl Bank
- 3 Barbados Series B Sep 30, 2033
- 4 Fortress World Fixed Income Fund
- 5 GEL Note Nov 30 2023

#### EXPENSES

Manager: 0.75% per annum Custodian & Administrator: 0.20% on first \$30M in net assets 0.175% on next \$50M in net assets 0.15% on amounts over \$80M in net assets Redemption Charge: 2% for funds held less than 6 months Up to 1% for funds held less than 6 months - 2 years Nil after 2 years

## **MANAGER & ADMINISTRATOR**

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW

#### DIRECTORS

Roger Cave, Chairman Ruth Henry John Howard Greg McConnie Maria Nicholls Tracey Shuffler John Williams

# **Caribbean Pension Fund**

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- The three classes of shares of the Pension Fund declined between 0.8% and 2.4% in the third quarter and are up between 3.2% and 6.9% over the past year. Stocks and bonds were both weaker this quarter on concerns over higher interest rates.
- Returns by class of share are shown in the table to the right.

Your company pension plan is a cornerstone for building financial security in retirement. Another important building block is investments you make independently in long-term assets like stocks, bonds, or real estate.

Whether it's within your company pension or outside, maximising long-term returns is a central objective. Of course, the other side of the return equation is how much "risk" you take. Riskier assets often have prices that move up and down more than less risky ones - but they also have higher expected returns. Unfortunately, there is no such thing as a risk-free investment – even holding cash is a risk because with little or no return, inflation will eat away at the purchasing power of that cash over time. The trick is to take enough risk, and to do it sensibly, over as long a time as possible where the short-term ups and downs become less important.

So how to achieve returns - what to buy, what to sell, and when? Most investors leave it to professionals to make these decisions via investments in mutual funds. Once you have identified your objective (growth for the long-term, or capital preservation, for example) we suggest identifying a fund to invest in regularly, ideally monthly. Funds typically give you instant diversification by geography and industry, along with professional management. Investors with a long time until retirement would normally invest in an equity fund where expected returns are higher. As retirement gets closer, investor's often move more into fixed income funds where the risk (and expected return) is lower. No matter what your objective the important thing is to set aside money regularly to invest in long-term assets for the future because retirement gets closer every year.

Investors in the Pension Fund typically select from three different classes of shares, based on personal circumstances and risk tolerance. These classes differ in how their assets are spread across the major asset classes of equities, bonds, and real estate and other assets. The graphs show how each of the classes (AA, CC, CS) is allocated currently. The reports on the Caribbean Growth Fund and Caribbean High Interest Fund on pages two and three of this quarterly report give you a direct look into the performance, positioning and outlook for the major underlying investments in the Pension Fund.

#### Fortress is a leading provider of investment management and pension administration services to defined contribution (DC) and defined benefit (DB) pension plans of all sizes.

In addition, our proprietary pension products serve companies and employees both before and after retirement:

Fortress Multi-Employer Pension Plan

Complete outsourced solution helps companies bypass the expense and burden of maintaining a standalone pension plan.
Each company selects their own suite of plan details including eligibility, vesting periods, contribution rates, and retirement ag
As a participant, you select your own investment option from the three classes of the Fortress Caribbean Pension Fund. nt age.

#### Personal Pension (RRSP)

- Individual account for investing your own pension savings.
   If you change employers your accumulated pension savings can be transferred into an RRSP and remain invested as you select. **INNOVA Lifestage Income Plan**
- An alternative to low rates on fixed annuities after retirement.
   You stay invested even in retirement and draw down a variable monthly pension from your own investment account.
   Any undrawn amount forms part of your estate.

The Fortress Caribbean Pension Fund is the primary investment offering behind all our pension products and for company defined contribution pension plans

#### **EXPENSES**

Manager: 0.50% per annum of net assets at the Fund level. Fees from the underlying Fortress funds in which the Fund invests are capped at between 0.25% and 0.50% per annum of net assets, depending on the fund. Custodian: \$7,500 per year paid by the Fund as a whole. Administrator: 0.03% per annum. Sales Charge: None Redemption Charge: none

**MANAGER & ADMINISTRATOR** Fortress Fund Managers Ltd CUSTODIAN SigniaGlobe Financial Group

AUDITORS **EY Barbados** 

ATTORNEY-AT-LAW Clarke Gittens Farmer



#### FUND OBJECTIVE

Capital growth, income and security over the long term, as appropriate to each class of share. The Fund invests in equities, fixed income, and real estate assets primarily via the other Fortress funds.

Net Asset Value	
Per Share:	\$29.88 / \$28.44 / \$19.05
	(AA/CC/CS)
Fund Net Assets:	\$402,341,547

#### **INVESTMENT RETURNS**

	3 Mo	1 Yr	3 Yrs	5 Yrs	Incept.
AA Share	-2.4%	6.9%	6.5%	3.2%	5.3%
CC Share	-1.8%	6.3%	5.6%	3.0%	5.0%
CS Share	-0.8%	3.2%	1.9%	1.8%	3.2%

\*periods longer than 1 year are annual compound returns





#### **CAPITAL SECURE (CS)**

EQUITIES 13% FIXED INCOME 87% REAL ESTATE/OTHER 0%

DIRECTORS Roger Cave, Chairman René Delmas Ruth Henry John Howard Desmond Kinch Greg McConnie Maria Nicholls Tracey Shuffler John Williams Please see our Fund Prospectus for further important information.

13%

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