

## Fund Manager Commentary

As of December 31, 2025

### Fund Highlights

- Primarily invests in income producing securities including corporate debt securities, mortgage-related securities, asset-backed securities, government securities (both U.S. government securities and foreign sovereign debt), public equities and preferred stocks
- Invests at least 50% of the portfolio in investment-grade rated securities
- Expanded opportunity set provides the flexibility to react to market dislocations
- Broadly diversified by sector, resulting in multiple sources of return potential and low correlation to traditional asset classes
- Duration management is used as a risk mitigation tool; seeks to avoid taking large duration positions due to the difficulty in predicting interest rates
- Active management and security selection are focused on building a high conviction portfolio

### Market Recap

The U.S. Federal Reserve (Fed) built on its September rate cut by delivering two additional 25 basis point reductions at the final meetings of the year. A weakening employment picture prompted the Federal Open-Market Committee to move policy closer to neutral. However, division among members have grown, with concerns over downside risks to the labor market at odds with views that the economy could still experience upside inflation surprises. While recent reports show inflation plateauing, goods prices appear the most likely source of higher-than-expected inflation, given ongoing tariff pressures and a pending Supreme Court ruling on their legality.

Following stronger-than-expected 4.3% GDP growth in third quarter, the economy is projected to see a modest slowdown in fourth quarter. However, this is largely due to the temporary drag from the U.S. government shutdown, with growth normalizing in first quarter 2026. Beyond weighing on activity, the shutdown has complicated the interpretation of economic data as a result of missing inputs and delayed releases. Nevertheless, as the effects dissipate, tax policy remains a potential tailwind, as accelerated depreciation should boost capital expenditures and individual tax cuts should support consumer spending. That said, job creation has slowed meaningfully and could begin to pressure consumption should unemployment rise further.

As rate cuts eased financial conditions and market fundamentals remained healthy, the S&P 500 continued to reach new highs over the quarter. Closing the year with an annual return of 17.9%, this marks a third consecutive year of double-digit gains for the S&P. Credit spreads were largely range bound during the quarter and remain near historically tight levels. Expectations for additional rate cuts in 2026, alongside benign long-term inflation expectations, contributed to a steepening yield curve over the quarter, despite the 10-year Treasury ending largely unchanged at 4.17%.

### Portfolio Review

The Touchstone Strategic Income Fund (Class A Shares, Load Waived) outperformed its benchmark, the Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index, for the quarter ended December 31, 2025.

Sector allocation was the largest contributor to relative outperformance due primarily to the overweight allocation to emerging market debt and an underweight to Treasuries. Emerging markets debt outperformed as spreads tightened and risk assets outperformed Treasuries over the period.

Security selection had a positive impact on relative outperformance due to outperformance within high yield and investment grade corporates. Within high yield corporates, there were multiple sectors contributing to outperformance with the largest drivers being media and

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Performance data quoted represents past performance, which is no guarantee of future results. The investment return and principal value of an investment in the Fund will fluctuate so that an investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Current performance may be higher or lower than performance data given. **For performance information current to the most recent month-end, visit [TouchstoneInvestments.com/mutual-funds](http://TouchstoneInvestments.com/mutual-funds).**



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retailers. Within investment grade corporates, the primary driver of relative performance was an underweight to technology, which underperformed over the quarter.

The Fund did not materially adjust sector allocations over the quarter, rather focusing on finding issuers with compelling bottom-up narratives. However, the Fund continued to opportunistically reduce high yield corporate exposure during the quarter.

Interest rate management was a contributor to relative outperformance during the quarter as the Fund was managed with less duration than the benchmark and made tactical adjustments as rates fluctuated. The Fund averaged a duration of 5.1 years versus 6.0 years for the benchmark, opportunistically adjusting exposure within its target range and adding real yield exposure through TIPS. Performance benefited from a steepening yield curve, as short rates declined amid Fed rate cuts while longer-term yields moved modestly higher, leaving the 10-year largely unchanged. Although curve positioning began and ended the quarter near neutral, tactical positioning toward a steeper curve and active duration management modestly enhanced relative results.

### **Outlook and Conclusion**

As we enter the new year, the investment landscape remains uncertain, though optimism for 2026 continues to build. The U.S. economy has shown resilience despite trade and geopolitical headwinds, supported by strong personal consumption—particularly among higher-income households benefiting from the wealth effect—and sustained investment in AI infrastructure. These forces are expected to remain key drivers of growth into 2026, even as elevated uncertainty persists.

The Fund is positioned with a modest overweight to risk, representing approximately 30% of the risk budget, reflecting valuations that are tight relative to history and an outlook characterized by elevated uncertainty. Sector positioning emphasizes relative value and bottom-up opportunities while maintaining flexibility to add risk if conditions improve. Investment Grade Credit remains a core overweight, focused on higher-quality financials and utilities and favoring the front and intermediate portions of the curve, while Technology exposure is underweight due to anticipated issuance pressure. Securitized Products exposure remains overweight, with a preference for non-agency asset backed securities, residential mortgage backed securities, and commercial mortgage backed securities and reduced collateralized loan obligation exposure due to valuation concerns. Emerging Market Debt remains near the low end of its historical range, concentrated in selective below-investment-grade opportunities, while High Yield exposure was modestly reduced as spreads have become expensive, preserving capacity to add risk at more attractive levels.

From a rates perspective, duration was tactically managed within a 4.75–5.25 year range, averaging 5.1 years for the quarter, with a bias toward longer real yields and a largely neutral yield curve stance. While rate volatility has

moderated, shifting expectations for future policy actions are expected to create ongoing opportunities for tactical adjustments. Overall, the Fund is well positioned to navigate an environment of moderate growth and elevated uncertainty, with a prudent credit overweight, disciplined security selection, and active duration management supporting performance across a range of potential economic environments.

The yield curve steepened over the quarter and the Fund is targeting a largely neutral curve positioning. However, we expect further opportunities for tactical adjustments as volatility remains elevated and investors adjust their expectations for future rate cuts amid new economic data.

The Fund is positioned well to navigate the current environment of elevated uncertainty and more moderate economic growth. We believe a modest overweight to credit sectors is prudent given valuations are tight of historical medians and uncertainty exists from trade policy, geopolitical tension, and pending court decisions on executive authority. While growth forecasts for 2026 have been slowly improving, recent labor market weakness presents downside risk to economic growth. If the economic landscape remains stable, the Fund is positioned to benefit from additional spread risk relative to the benchmark. However, if economic growth slows materially, the Fund is positioned to add exposure opportunistically as risk assets would likely experience further weakness. Additionally, we believe positive security selection can benefit the Fund across different market environments and tactical duration management allows the Fund to take advantage of elevated interest rate volatility.

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**Fund Facts**

Class	Inception Date	Symbol	CUSIP	Annual Fund Operating Expense Ratio	
				Total	Net
A Shares	11/01/93	TQPA	89154M306	1.14%	0.96%
C Shares	04/01/94	TQPC	89154M405	2.00%	1.69%
Y Shares	01/29/15	TQPY	89154M504	0.91%	0.67%
INST Shares	07/19/21	TQPI	89154M603	0.89%	0.62%
<b>Total Fund Assets</b>	<b>\$297.0 Million</b>				

Expense ratio is annualized. Data as of the current prospectus. Touchstone Advisors has contractually agreed to waive a portion of its fees and/or reimburse certain Fund expenses in order to limit certain annual fund operating expenses (excluding Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses "AFFE" and other expenses, if any) to 0.95% for Class A Shares, 1.68% for Class C Shares, 0.66% for Class Y Shares and 0.61% for Class INST Shares. These expense limitations will remain in effect until at least 01/29/27. Share class availability differs by firm.

**Annualized Total Returns**

	4Q25	YTD	1 Year	3 Year	5 Year	10 Year	Inception
Excluding Max Sales Charge							
A Shares	1.77%	9.36%	9.36%	8.32%	2.75%	4.23%	5.56%
C Shares	1.28%	8.54%	8.54%	7.39%	1.99%	3.49%	5.10%
Y Shares	1.85%	9.67%	9.67%	8.50%	3.02%	4.45%	3.71%
INST Shares	1.56%	9.44%	9.44%	8.62%	—	—	3.28%
Benchmark	1.10%	7.30%	7.30%	4.66%	-0.36%	2.01%	—
Including Max Sales Charge							
A Shares	-1.53%	5.68%	5.68%	7.14%	1.74%	3.73%	5.40%
C Shares	0.28%	7.54%	7.54%	7.39%	1.99%	3.49%	5.10%

Max 3.25% sales charge for Class A Shares and 1% Contingent Deferred Sales Charge for Class C Shares held less than 1 year.

Benchmark - Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index

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The Bloomberg U.S. Aggregate Bond Index is an unmanaged index comprised of U.S. investment grade, fixed rate bond market securities, including government, government agency, corporate and mortgage-backed securities between one and ten years.

The indexes mentioned are unmanaged statistical composites of stock market or bond market performance. Investing in an index is not possible. Unmanaged index returns do not reflect any fees, expenses or sales charges.

**A Word About Risk**

The Fund invests in fixed-income securities which can experience reduced liquidity during certain market events, lose their value as interest rates rise and are subject to credit risk which is the risk of deterioration in the financial condition of an issuer and/or general economic conditions that can cause the issuer to not make timely payments of principal and interest also causing the securities to decline in value and an investor can lose principal. When interest rates rise, the price of debt securities generally falls. Longer term securities are generally more volatile. The Fund invests in non-investment grade debt securities which are considered speculative with respect to the issuers' ability to make timely payments of interest and principal, may lack liquidity and has had more frequent and larger price changes than other debt securities. The Fund invests in mortgage-backed securities and asset-backed securities which are subject to the risks of prepayment, defaults, changing interest rates and at times, the financial condition of the issuer. The Fund invests in investment grade debt securities which may be downgraded by an NRSRO to below investment grade status. The Fund invests in U.S. government agency securities which are neither issued nor guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury and are not guaranteed against price movements due to changing interest rates. The Advisor engages a sub-advisor to make investment decisions for the Fund's portfolio; it may be unable to identify and retain a sub-advisor who achieves superior investment returns relative to other similar sub-advisors. Events in the U.S. and global financial markets, including actions taken to stimulate or stabilize economic growth may at times result in unusually high market volatility, which could negatively impact Fund performance and cause it to experience illiquidity, shareholder redemptions, or other potentially adverse effects. Banks and financial services companies could suffer losses if interest rates rise or economic conditions deteriorate. The Fund invests in equities which are subject to market volatility and loss. The Fund invests in preferred stocks which are relegated below bonds for payment should the issuer be liquidated. If interest rates rise, the fixed dividend on preferred stocks may be less attractive, causing their price to decline. The Fund invests in foreign securities which carry the associated risks of economic and political instability, market liquidity, currency volatility and accounting standards that differ from those of U.S. markets and may offer less protection to investors. The Fund invests in emerging markets securities which are more likely to experience turmoil or rapid changes in market or economic conditions than developed countries. The Fund invests in sovereign debt securities which are issued by foreign governments whose respective economies could have an important effect on their ability or willingness to service their debt which could affect the value of the securities. The Fund invests in derivatives such as futures contracts. Derivatives can be highly volatile, illiquid and difficult to value, subject to counterparty and leverage risks and there is risk that changes in the value of a derivative held by the Fund will not correlate with the Fund's other investments. Gains or losses from speculative positions in a derivative may be much greater than the original cost and potential losses may be substantial. The Fund invests in mortgage dollar rolls which involve increased risk and volatility, as the securities the Fund is required to repurchase may be worth less than the securities that the Fund originally held. The Fund may experience higher portfolio turnover which may lead to increased fund expenses, lower investment returns and higher short-term capital gains taxable to shareholders. The Fund invests in repurchase agreements which are considered loans by the Fund and may suffer a loss of principal and interest in the event of counterparty defaults. Current and future portfolio holdings are subject to change.

Please consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses of the Fund carefully before investing. The prospectus and the summary prospectus contain this and other information about the Fund. To obtain a prospectus or a summary prospectus, contact your financial professional or download and/or request one at [TouchstoneInvestments.com/resources](http://TouchstoneInvestments.com/resources) or call Touchstone at 800.638.8194. Please read the prospectus and/or summary prospectus carefully before investing.

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