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CFP

Welcome to 2024!

Happy New Year and welcome to 2024! We hope that you and your family had an enjoyable holiday season. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to help you pursue your financial goals. We are excited to see what the new year will bring us.

Overall, 2023 was a good year for investors. Interest rates continued to rise, but at a much slower and less consistent pace than in 2022 and recession worries continued to make headlines, however investors still experienced strong positive returns in the major indexes in 2023. Notably, the year ended on a high note in December as the Federal Reserve decided for the third straight time not to raise interest rates. They also indicated that interest rate cuts were forecasted to start in 2024. Equity markets responded favorably, and investors are seeing the light at the end of the pandemic-induced tunnel. While equities are looking brighter, this year brings a presidential election which could bring major changes. 2024 could prove to be a very interesting year.

Heading into this new year, we will continue to stand by our commitment to helping you on your financial goals journey. **We believe a proactive approach that anticipates the needs of our clients is optimal.** To assist us with this, we have included in this communication a **2024 checklist** that will help you identify items that you may want to address with us over the next year.

One of our goals in 2024 is to exceed your expectations and provide you with first-class service. We take pride in our ability to understand and effectively respond to your needs and enjoy providing timely information and holistic service to you.



2024 will include offering the following services to you:

- Client review meetings.
- Quarterly economic updates.
- Tax reports to keep you updated on proactive tax saving opportunities and changes.
- Regularly scheduled updates on timely topics.
- Consistent and meaningful articles on topics that directly affect you.

Looking Ahead to 2024

While there are many aspects to overall financial planning, the following are some specific topics we will continue to watch carefully as we head into the new year.

- **Interest Rates:** Interest rate movements continue to be critical for investors. Since 2022, the Federal Funds Rate rose from a range of 0 – 0.25% all the way up to 5.25 - 5.50% by the end of 2023. Federal officials have indicated this may be the end of rate increases and are watching key indicators to assess if, when, and how much movement we will see in the federal interest rate range in 2024.
- **Inflation:** Inflationary concerns are important for investors. We saw a significant overall slowdown of inflation in 2023, however, there is still more to be done to reach the Fed's 2% target range. We will continue to monitor inflation numbers as the 2024 data becomes available.
- **Recession Risk:** While many analysts think we are out of the woods for a recession, there is still a possibility that one could just be delayed. The good news is the likelihood that a potential recession will be severe is low. The economy and employment remain strong, but we will continue to stay apprised of the direction of recovery efforts and how they are affecting the economy.
- **Stock Market Valuations:** Valuations are used as key predictors of equity returns. While we cannot predict long- and short-term valuations, we will continue to help you identify your risk tolerance and time horizons. We also understand that market volatility is a normal part of the investment experience and can help you use practical behavior when making financial decisions.
- **Your Personal Situation:** **Your personal situation is always our highest priority.** We are here to help you with any financial moves or concerns you have throughout the year. We understand that each individual and household has different goals and needs. We will continue our tradition of keeping you informed of any changes that we think may affect your personal situation.

We enter 2024 with the continued mantra of “proceed with caution”. Having a solid foundation and strategy is critical to the outcome of your financial plans. Revisiting your plan and keeping it current is also a sound practice we feel should be conducted on a consistent basis. Our mission is to provide you with guidance and support on your journey toward your financial goals.

As always, we are here for you! If you have any questions or concerns, please call our office and we would be happy to assist you!




We look forward to helping you pursue your financial goals in 2024!

Help us identify items that you would like addressed in the coming year!

After reviewing this list, please call our office to discuss any items you have checked off. This will help us advise you in the most effective and proactive manner.

- Do you anticipate changes to your investment goals?
- Has your risk tolerance changed?
- Have your 2024 income or savings needs changed?
- Do you plan to retire or change jobs?
- Will there be a change in your marital status?
- Do you plan to move, refinance, or sell/transfer a major asset such as a home or business?
- Did you recently receive or anticipate receiving a gift or inheritance?
- Will you have any changes in your income needs +/- (i.e., vacation, assisted living needs, selling home, child/grandchild assistance)?
- Do you expect any additional family members or dependents?
- Do you anticipate any additional dependents such as an elderly parent or other family member? Will they require assisted living?
- Do you have a child/grandchild you will be assisting with their educational cost needs through a 529 plan?
- Do you anticipate any major transfer of wealth?
- Do you plan on gifting to heirs or donating money to charity?
- Do you need to adjust your estate plan?
- Do you maximize your ability to use retirement plans?
- Do you want to explore converting a traditional IRA to a Roth IRA?
- Do you or a dependent family member have a severe illness?
- Do you anticipate any life, financial, or employment (retiring) changes that may require you to adjust your life and health insurance policies?
- Did you contribute to an IRA? If not, would you like to discuss contributing to an IRA before April's tax deadline?
- Is there anything else we should know to help you plan for 2024?

Important Birthdays

-  **50** Allows for catch-up contributions to IRAs and qualified retirement plans
 -  **55** If you are retired, allows you to take distributions from your 401(k) without the 10% penalty
 -  **59½** Allows you to take distributions from an IRA, annuity, or other retirement plan without penalty
 -  **60** Allows for start of widow/widower benefits from Social Security
 -  **62** Allows for starting early Social Security benefits
 -  **65** Allows for enrollment in Medicare and the government drug plan
 -  **66-67** Allows for full retirement benefits from Social Security
 -  **70** Start date for enhanced Social Security benefits if you deferred claiming benefits previously
 -  **70½** Allowed to make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from IRA
 -  **73** Mandatory required minimum distribution from retirement accounts must be taken no later than April 1st of the year after the year you turn 73
- If you have an important birthday in 2024, please let us know!*

One of our goals is to offer our services to other people just like you!

Many of our best relationships have come through introductions from our clients.

We would be honored if you would:

- Add a name to our mailing list
- Invite a guest to a workshop or webinar
- Encourage someone to schedule a complimentary financial checkup

Do you know someone who could benefit from our services?

Please call Sue or Beth at (727) 724-9499 and we'd be happy to explore how we can help them with their financial goals!

George F. Cerwin, CFP®, CLU is President of GFC Financial Management and has over 45 years of experience working with retirees and those about to retire. George offers Securities and Investment Advisory Services through **Osaic Wealth, Inc.** member FINRA and SIPC. Insurance Services offered through GFC Financial Management, not affiliated with **Osaic Wealth, Inc.** Visit our website: www.gfcfinancial.com. Our office address is 2764 Sunset Point Road, #600, Clearwater, FL 33759 and phone number 727-724-9499.

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