

At a Glance

During the first quarter of 2019, the Global Wealth Strategy portfolio produced a net return of 7.68%. We believe the combination of an oversold market and changes in the U.S. Federal Reserve's (Fed) outlook on interest rates helped all asset segments in the portfolio gain more than 5% for the quarter.

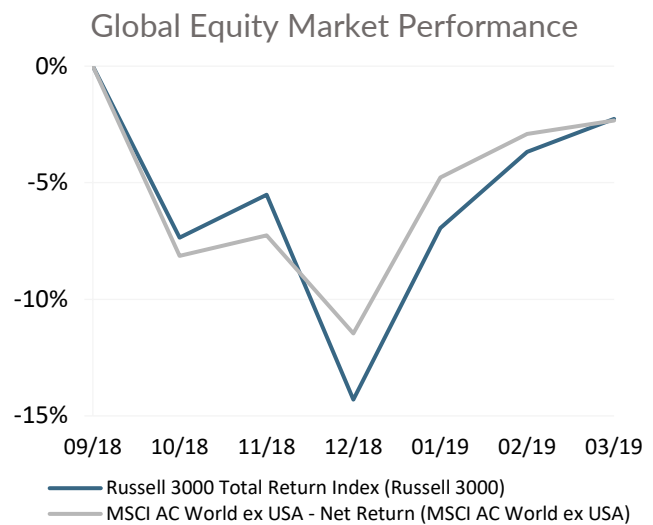
Market Recap

Global equity markets rebounded after suffering large losses in the fourth quarter of 2018 over concerns of a global economic slowdown and uncertainty around trade agreements between the US and China.

Fueling the rebound was a surprise announcement from the Fed that there would be a pause on hiking interest rates. This helped alleviate concerns over the impact additional rate hikes would have on an already slowing global economy.

The chart to the right shows the first quarter's dramatic turnaround in equity markets.

U.S. equities lead global equity markets with the Russell 3000 producing a return of 14.04%, while international markets also put in a strong quarter with a 10.31% return for the MSCI AC World-ex USA.



What Helped and What Hurt

All asset segments benefited from the broad-based market rally and made positive contributions to GWS portfolio's return for the first quarter.

Our Fixed Income allocation reacted favorably, as expected, to the Fed's halt on raising interest rates. This guided the Fixed Income class to be the largest contributor of performance for the quarter. Fixed Income was led by our allocation to High Yield and Emerging Market Bonds with the iBoxx Liquid High Yield Index up 7.53% and the Barclays Emerging Market Bond Index up 5.43%.

Our Inflation Hedges asset class was just behind Fixed Income in terms of contribution for the quarter. The declining yield of the 10-year treasury helped spark a move higher in REITs and MLPs with the MSCI US REIT Index up 16.27% and the Alerian MLP Index up 16.82%.

Market expectations that the Fed won't raise rates again over the next couple of years far outweighed the lower earnings estimates and mixed economic data in the US. This provided a favorable environment for our US Equities asset class, which finished the quarter up 12.93% and made a significant contribution to the portfolio's overall return.

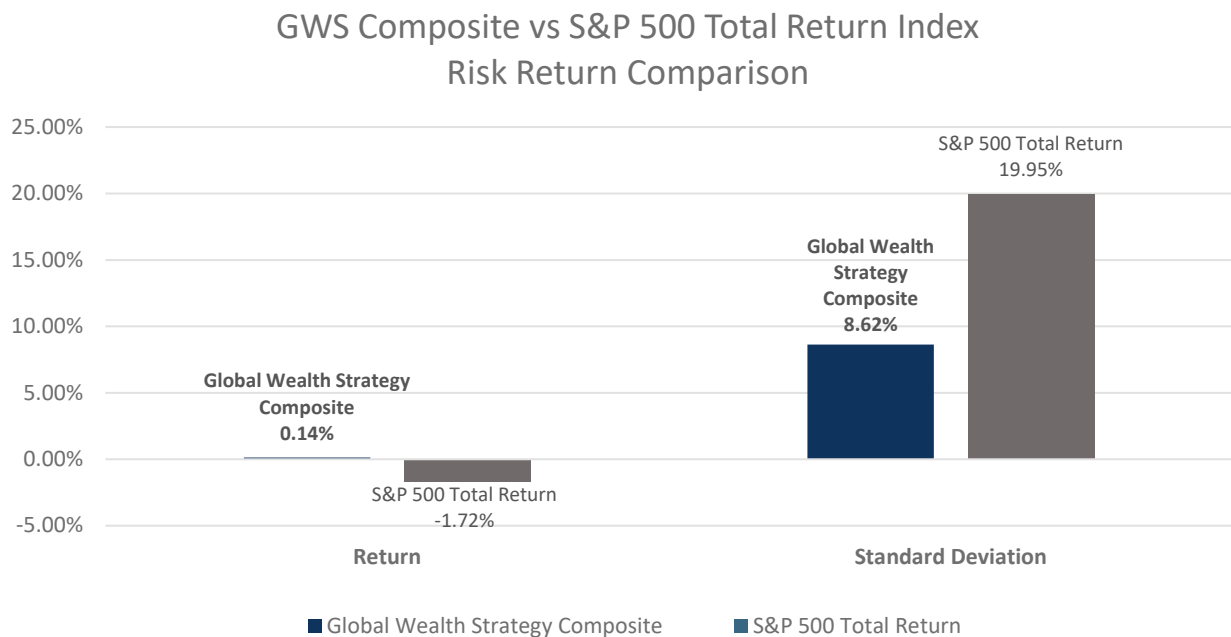
Internationally, concerns over an economic slowdown outside the US, had a greater impact on our International Equities exposure tempering the performance of the asset class which was only up 8.83%.

Final Thoughts

The past 6 months highlight how our proprietary process of evaluating market risk was effective in both up and down markets.

The S&P 500 Total Return Index was down -13.52% during the fourth quarter of 2018 (GWS -6.96%) but rallied back 13.65% in the first quarter of 2019. This produced significant volatility and subjected investors to an uncomfortable roller coaster ride. The question is, was it worth it?

The chart below shows the return and standard deviation for the S&P 500 Index and the GWS portfolio from 10/1/18 to 3/31/19.



Based on our evaluation of risk, the GWS strategy adapted to the fourth quarter’s high-risk environment.

As our measurement of risk continued to decline throughout the first quarter, the strategy took advantage of the declining risk environment by increasing the allocation to growth assets.

In the end, the GWS strategy delivered more return with significantly less volatility than the S&P 500 Total Return Index over the six-month period. We believe producing a smoother ride gives investors the confidence to stay invested and grow their wealth - even during turbulent markets.

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