



# Monthly Investment Commentary

March 2019

## Another Strong Month For Markets

February was a short but sweet month for investors. U.S. equity markets followed up their strong performance in January with another solid month of positive returns. The Dow Jones Industrial Average led the way with a monthly return of 4.03 percent. The S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite were close behind with returns of 3.21 percent and 3.60 percent, respectively. All three indices have already returned double digits to start the year.

Improving fundamentals supported this positive performance. According to FactSet, the blended earnings growth rate for the S&P 500 stands at 13.1 percent (as of February 22, 2019). This result is up from estimates of 12.1 percent at the end of December. Further, this improvement was widespread, with 7 of 11 sectors reporting better earnings than at year-end.

### MRM NET COMPOSITE PORTFOLIO RESULTS (As of 02/28/2019)

MRM PLATFORMS VS. BENCHMARK	YTD	1-YEAR	3 Years Annualized	5 Years Annualized
<b>Dynamic Overlay</b>	<b>+5.83%</b>	<b>+1.96%</b>	<b>+11.67%</b>	<b>+4.15%</b>
<i>Morningstar Average Tactical Return</i>	+6.09%	-1.67%	+6.60%	+2.73%
<b>All Equity</b>	<b>+7.03%</b>	<b>+7.52%</b>	<b>+18.56%</b>	<b>+10.42%</b>
<i>S&amp;P 500 Total Return</i>	+11.48%	+4.68%	+15.28%	+10.67%
<b>Dynamic International</b>	<b>+3.47%</b>	<b>-13.72%</b>	<b>+2.84%</b>	<b>-2.85%</b>
<i>MSCI EAFE with dividends</i>	+9.32%	-5.57%	+9.85%	+2.54%
<b>Global Strategies</b>	<b>+7.18%</b>	<b>-2.56%</b>	<b>+9.63%</b>	<b>+4.93%</b>
<i>(50%) S&amp;P/(50%) MSCI EAFE</i>	+10.40%	-0.45%	+12.47%	+6.91%
<b>Tax-Advantaged Income*</b>	<b>+12.70%</b>	<b>+3.86%</b>	<b>NA</b>	<b>NA</b>
<i>Dow Jones US Select Dividend Total Return</i>	+9.95%	+5.70%	NA	NA

*MRM Group claims compliance with the Global Investment Performance Standards (GIPS®). Returns are net of fees. For more information visit [www.mrminv.com](http://www.mrminv.com).*

*Please contact MRM Group to obtain a Compliant Presentation and/or MRM's list of Composite descriptions.*

*\* Tax-Advantaged Income composite started 06/01/2017.*

**International**

The international story was much the same. The MSCI EAFE Index gained 2.55 percent in February. The MSCI Emerging Markets Index came in a bit lower, with a return of 0.23 percent. Developed markets were supported by news of a potential Brexit delay, but a global slowdown in trade continued to weigh on emerging markets.

Technical continued to be a challenge for developed international markets. The MSCI EAFE Index remained below its 200-day moving average for the ninth month in a row, although it came close to hitting its trend line by month-end. Technically speaking, emerging markets had a better month. They broke above their trend line at the beginning of the month and ended February in positive territory.

**Risks Diminished**

Another driver of the strong market performance was the widespread reduction in major risks to markets. Here in the U.S., we avoided a second government shutdown in as many months by passing a bipartisan funding bill by the February 15 deadline. We also saw progress on trade negotiations with China, with the U.S. putting a stop to scheduled tariff increases while negotiations continued. Any positive news here would be a boon for markets.

**Keep An Eye On The Risks**

Most of the major risks we have been worrying about over the past few months appear to be diminishing. Still, there are

some important areas to watch. The housing market remains a major domestic concern and is in a period of contraction. Existing home sales have fallen on a year-over-year basis for each of the past 11 months. Plus, homebuilder confidence increased slightly in February but is still well below levels seen a year ago. Housing is a major sector of the U.S. economy and provides many knock-on effects for other industries. As such, this slowdown is concerning.

New risks could also spring up at any time. For example, the hostilities between India and Pakistan recently flared up over military conflict in the Kashmir region. This has been an ongoing conflict between the two countries since their separation. But any escalation between two nuclear powers is concerning. There have been positive developments here, including Pakistan's offer to return a captured Indian pilot. Nonetheless, this is an important conflict to watch.

**MRM's View**

But what about the current quarter? And for that matter, all of 2019? Our analysis suggests earnings in the first quarter will be flat. The consensus is calling for earnings to be down on a year-over-year basis somewhere in the -3% area. In recent months, earnings estimates have come down as domestic and global growth fears have bothered analysts. Investors have been debating the earnings growth prospects for 2019 as a whole for at least the last nine months. We remain bullish.

Source: BallFinancial

**MRM model holdings as of December 31, 2018**

**MRM Global Strategies**

BOEING CO	5.00%
CVS HEALTH CORPORATION COM	5.00%
DISNEY WALT CO DISNEY	5.00%
ISHARES MSCI EAFE MINIMUM VOLATILITY	1.00%
ISHARES MSCI BRAZIL INDEX FUND	1.00%
PEPSICO INC	5.00%
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE INC NEW	5.00%
FDIC CASH NOT COVERED BY SIPC	73.00%

**MRM Dynamic International**

ISHARES MSCI EAFE MIN VOLATILITY	1.00%
ISHARES MSCI NEW ZEALAND INV	5.00%
ISHARES MSCI SINGAPORE INDEX	1.00%
ISHARES MSCI BRAZIL INDEX FUND	1.00%
SPDR S&P 500 TRUST	5.00%
FDIC CASH NOT COVERED BY SIPC	87.00%

**MRM Dynamic Overlay – ETFs**

ISHARES MSCI EMERGING MARKETS	5.00%
ISHARES MSCI EAFE MIN VOLATILITY	1.00%
SPDR GOLD SHARES	4.00%
ISHARES RUSSELL 1000 VAL INDEX	1.00%
ISHARES DOW JONES US HEALTHCARE SECTOR	1.00%
INVESCO S&P 500 LOW VOLATILITY	5.00%
SPDR S&P 500 TRUST	5.00%
CONSUMER STAPLES SELECT SECTOR SPDR FUND	2.00%
UTILITIES SELECT SECTOR SPDR	5.00%
HEALTH CARE SELECT SECTOR	1.00%
FDIC CASH NOT COVERED BY SIPC	70.00%

**MRM All Equity**

CVS HEALTH CORPORATION COM	5.00%
SPDR GOLD SHARES	3.00%
MERCK & CO INC	5.00%
PEPSICO INC	5.00%
PROCTER & GAMBLE CO	5.00%
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE INC	5.00%
FDIC CASH NOT COVERED BY SIPC	72.00%

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STRATEGY	BENCHMARK	VEHICLES	CASH HOLDINGS <i>(When Potential Investments Look Unattractive)</i>
Dynamic Overlay	Morningstar Tactical Allocation	Domestic Securities	Up to 70%
All Domestic Equity	S&P 500 Total Return	Domestic Securities/ADR's	Up to 60%
Dynamic International	MSCI EAFE Gross	Exchange-Traded Funds (ETF's)/Other Securities	Up to 25%
Global Strategies	50% S&P 500 Total Return/ 50% MSCI EAFE Gross	Exchange-Traded Funds (ETF's)/Other Securities	Up to 50%
Tax-Advantaged Income	Dow Jones US Select Dividend Index	Domestic Securities	Up to 4%

The portfolios do NOT use inverse or leveraged ETFs. Universe vehicles may change, from time to time, when approved by the principal of MRM Asset Allocation Group at its sole discretion.

### BENCHMARK NOTES

Morningstar’s Tactical Allocation Category averages returns for the peer group based on the return of each fund within the group, for the period shown. The S&P 500 Index with dividends is an unmanaged composite of 500 large-capitalization companies whose data is obtained from the Standard & Poor’s website. S&P 500 is a registered trademark of McGraw-Hill, Inc. The MSCI EAFE Gross Index is a free float-adjusted market capitalization index that is designed to measure the equity market performance of developed markets, excluding the U.S. and Canada, with data from the MSCI website using price with reinvestment of dividends. The performance of blended benchmarks is shown for comparison because MRM uses securities which track indices related to these products. The Dow Jones US Select Dividend Index comprises 100 stocks and aims to represent the U.S.’s leading stocks by dividend yield. An investment cannot be made directly into an index.

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