# **Different Concerns, Same Results**

Over the past 15 months, investors have gone from being concerned about the possibility of a once in a lifetime economic collapse to widespread social unrest to the negativity and uncertainty around an election to historically high stock valuations. Now investors are concerned that the massive government stimulus that has been pumped into the economy will collide with the strength of a fully reopened economy to create inflation that we haven't seen since the 1970's. All the while, the stock market has continued to rise, gaining over 50% since the end of March 2020, including an 8% increase in the second quarter. The old adage "stocks climb a wall of worry" feels particularly relevant today. We think equities can continue to do so albeit at a slower pace than the blistering returns we've seen over the past few years.

After a strong start to the year for most risk assets, the pendulum has swung back towards larger growth-oriented (mainly technology) stocks during the second quarter after a six month period of leadership for smaller value-oriented (mainly financials, energy, and materials) companies as the 10-year Treasury yield dropped from 1.73% to 1.44%. However, rates remain higher than they were at the beginning of 2021, resulting in bonds having broadly declined by about 0.9%. Small and mid-cap stocks have also fared Asset Category YTD U.S. Large Cap Stocks 8.55 15.25 U.S. Mid Cap Stocks 7.50 16.25 U.S. Small Cap Stocks 4.29 17.54 Developed International Stock 5.48 9.16 Intermediate Term Bonds 0.98 -0.90 U.S Value Stocks 5.21 17.05 **U.S Growth Stocks** 11.93 12 99 Commodities 31.40 15.70 Gold 3.26 -6.50

> Source: Morningstar Direct. Please see Important Disclosures on page 4 for index definitions.

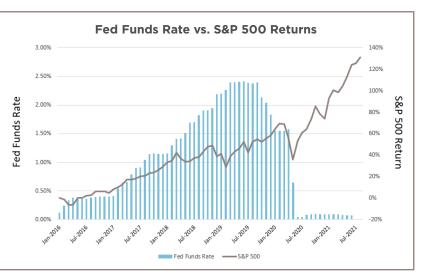
well this year, while international stocks gained 9.2%. With a renewed wave of inflation fears hitting the market, commodities have been one of the best performing asset classes this year, up 31%, after several years of below average returns.

## Is it inflation or higher interest rates that drive the market?

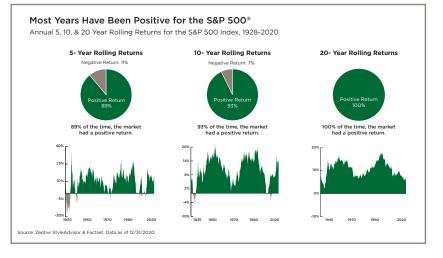
The recent inflation fears are the direct result of widespread supply/demand imbalances resulting from the speed and strength of the economic recovery. The consumer price index rose 5% in May, its biggest increase in 13 years. However, the Federal Reserve has called the inflation increase "transitory" and has not taken action, bond yields have actually declined, and the stock market has been strong since that initial CPI reading. These three factors indicate that inflation is expected to only be temporary, but time will tell. If in fact inflation becomes a more lasting concern, interest rate hikes by the Federal Reserve could be the factor that causes a sharp disruption in stocks. Rising rates have historically created a headwind for stocks. However, in the last cycle (see chart to the right), the S&P 500<sup>®</sup> Index was able to gain 9.3% per year (30% cumulative) while the Fed raised rates from near zero to 2.4% between 2016 and 2018. The market then rebounded sharply as rates plummeted in 2019/2020. The meteoric rise could make it more vulnerable to any increases in interest rates.

## Stay focused on the long-term

There are always things to be fearful of in investing. Most of those things the market can work through and tolerate, but occasionally we have a prolonged period of difficult returns. Although we closely follow the market, we realize that trying to time the market's peaks and valleys is incredibly difficult. Therefore, we try to remain focused on the long term and like to use history as our guide. The chart to the right shows that the stock market has a positive return 90% of the time if you have a 5 year time horizon and has only had a few 10 year periods with negative returns. We need to keep this in mind as the market ebbs and flows and think about adding money during trying times for the market. If your time horizon is shorter, we recommend taking the opportunity that the market has provided to rebalance your portfolio or even become a bit more conservative as the market remains near all-time highs.



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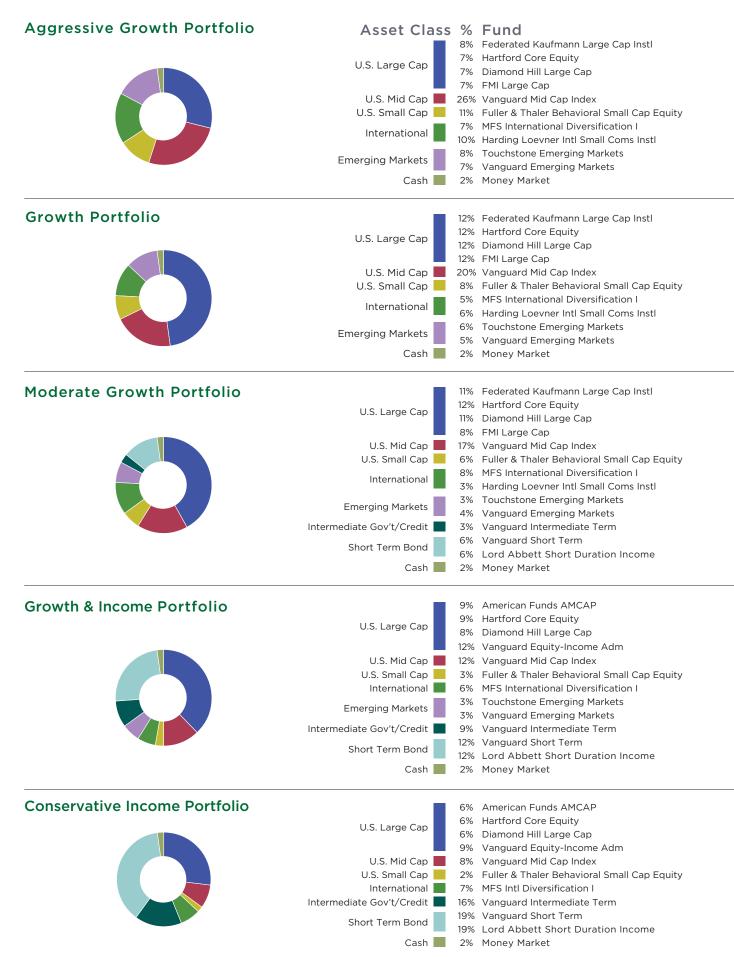




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# Returns Net of Fees

Fund / Index Name	Fund / Index Performance at Net Asset Value**						D	Expense Ratio	
	YTD	1 Year	3 Years*	5 Years*	10 Years*	Up Capture	Down Capture	Gross	Net <sup>6</sup>
Large Cap									
American Funds AMCAP F3	13.33	35.25	16.61	17.60	14.53	98.41	94.62	0.34	0.34
Diamond Hill Large Cap I	15.31	45.42	15.60	15.14	12.96	97.97	102.19	0.67	0.67
Federated Hermes Kaufmann Large Cap <sup>1</sup>	8.73	30.45	21.43	20.17	16.23	-	-	0.93	0.84
FMI Large Cap Institutional	10.48	37.87	12.46	13.38	11.93	88.75	87.70	0.67	0.67
Hartford Core Equity Y <sup>2</sup>	12.68	39.10	19.15	17.29	15.46	98.71	94.57	0.48	0.46
Vanguard Equity-Income Adm	15.86	37.84	12.67	12.29	12.50	88.70	89.50	0.19	0.19
Benchmark 1: S&P 500 TR USD	15.25	40.79	18.67	17.65	14.84	100.00	100.00	-	-
Mid Cap and Small Cap									
Fuller & Thaler Behavioral Sm-Cp Eq Inst <sup>3</sup>	22.70	54.25	13.43	16.30	-	-	-	0.80	0.80
Vanguard Mid Cap Index Admiral	15.31	46.90	16.49	15.75	13.12	90.66	86.14	0.05	0.05
Benchmark 1: Russell 2500 TR USD	16.97	57.79	15.24	16.35	12.86	100.00	100.00	-	-
International									
MFS Intl Diversification I <sup>4</sup>	6.95	31.09	11.56	12.72	7.82	95.77	84.67	0.87	0.85
MFS International New Discovery I	5.01	29.00	8.02	10.97	8.02	94.66	80.79	1.04	1.04
Benchmark 1: MSCI EAFE NR USD	8.83	32.35	8.27	10.28	5.89	100.00	100.00	-	-
Emerging Markets									
Touchstone Sands Cptl Emerg Mkts Gr $Y^5$	5.73	50.82	20.70	19.09	-	-	-	1.32	1.32
Vanguard Emerging Mkts Stock Idx Adm	8.89	38.72	11.60	11.92	3.91	99.93	100.94	0.14	0.14
Benchmark 1: MSCI EM NR USD	7.45	40.90	11.27	13.03	4.28	100.00	100.00	-	-
Intermediate Gov't/Credit									
Vanguard Interm-Term Bond Index Adm	-1.90	-0.18	6.62	3.43	4.23	160.59	200.14	0.07	0.07
Benchmark 1: BBgBarc US Govt/Credit Index	-0.90	0.19	4.70	2.63	2.76	100.00	100.00	-	-
Short-Term Bond									
Lord Abbett Short Duration Income	1.03	4.16	3.54	2.87	2.93	151.04	49.16	0.49	0.49
Vanguard Short-Term Investment-Grade Adm	0.21	2.13	4.18	2.80	2.61	142.77	162.94	0.10	0.10
Benchmark 1: BBgBarc US Govt/Credit 1-3 Yr	0.00	0.44	2.96	1.88	1.49	100.00	100.00	-	-

Performance shown is historical and is no guarantee of future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than the data quoted. To obtain performance data current to the most recent month end, please call (800) 846-6666. \*Returns greater than one year are annualized.

\*\*Mutual funds are offered in the FundAdvisor program at net asset value, but are subject to an annual investment advisory fee of up to **1.25%**. The Davenport wrap fee includes investment advice and brokerage execution. In addition to the FundAdvisor fee, clients will bear a proportionate share of each mutual fund's management and administrative expenses, including advisory fees paid to the mutual fund's investment advisors. The performance shows the actual performance of the shares at net asset value, and does not represent individual account performance. Past performance is no guarantee of future results. Current performance may be lower or higher than the data quoted. To obtain performance data current to the most recent month-end, please visit the following web sites: www.americanfunds.com, www.touchstoneinvestments.com, www.diamond-hill.com, www.dodgeandcox.com, www.eatonvance.com, www.fiduciarymgt.com, www.jhinvestments.com, www.mfs.com, www.vanguard.com. The investment and principal value of an investment will fluctuate. An investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Mutual Fund and Index returns are provided by Morningstar and Zephyr StyleADVISOR.

You should consider each mutual fund's investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses carefully before investing. Each mutual fund's prospectus contains this and other important information, should be read carefully before investing or sending money, and can be obtained by contacting your Investment Executive, or by calling (800) 846-6666. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate. An investor's shares, when redeemed, may be worth more or less than their original cost. Investing in securities carries risk including the possible loss of principal.

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#### Important Disclosures:

In June 2020, the names of the FundAdvisor composites were made due to a rebranding of the program. Maximum Growth composite was changed to Aggressive Growth, the Conservative Growth to Moderate Growth, Balanced to Growth & Income and the Conservative Balanced to Conservative Income.

The Adviser and certain of its affiliates on their own initiative have agreed to waive certain amounts of their respective fees and/or reimburse expenses. Effective January 1, 2021, total annual fund operating expenses (excluding acquired fund fees and expenses, dividends and other expenses related to short sales, interest expense, extraordinary expenses and proxy-related expenses paid by the Fund, if any) paid by the Fund's A, C, R, IS and R6 classes (after the voluntary waivers and/or reimbursements) will not exceed 1.08%, 1.86%, 1.47%, 0.83% and 0.77% (the "Fee Limit"), respectively, up to but not including the later of (the "Termination Date"): (a) January 1, 2022; or (b) the date of the Fund's next effective Prospectus. While the Adviser and its affiliates currently do not anticipate terminating or increasing these arrangements prior to the Termination Date, these arrangements may only be terminated or the Fee Limit increased prior to the Termination Date with the agreement of the Trustees. <sup>2</sup>Hartford Administrative Services Company ("HASCO"), the Fund's transfer agent, has contractually agreed to waive its transfer agency fee and/orreimburse transfer agency-related expenses to the extent necessary to limit the transfer agency fee for Class Y as follows: 0.08%. This contractualarrangement will remain in effect until February 28, 2022 unless the Board of Directors of The Hartford Mutual Funds, Inc. approves its earliertermination.<sup>3</sup> The Fund's investment adviser, Fuller & Thaler Asset Management, Inc. ("Fuller & Thaler" or the "Adviser") has contractually agreed to waive its management fee and/or reimburse Fund expenses so that total annual operating expenses do not exceed 1.30%, 1.80% 1.25%, 0.99%, and 0.90% for A Shares, C Shares, Investor Shares, Institutional Shares and R6 Shares, respectively, of the Fund's average daily net assets through January 31, 2022. 4 Massachusetts Financial Services Company has agreed in writing to bear the fund's expenses, excluding management fees, distribution and service fees, interest, taxes, extraordinary expenses, brokerage and transaction costs, investment-related expenses, and fees and expenses associated with investments in investment companies and other similar investment vehicles, such that "Other Expenses" do not exceed 0.10% of the class' average daily net assets annually for each of Class A, Class B, Class C, Class I, Class R1, Class R2, Class R3, and Class R4 shares, and 0.00% of the class' average daily net assets annually for Class R6 shares. This written agreement will continue until modified by the fund's Board of Trustees, but such agreement will continue until at least September 30, 2021. "Touchstone Advisors, Inc. (the "Advisor" or "Touchstone Advisors") and Touchstone Strategic Trust (the "Trust") have entered into a contractual expense limitation agreement whereby Touchstone Advisors will waive a portion of its fees or reimburse certain Fund expenses (excluding dividend and interest expenses relating to short sales; interest; taxes; brokerage commissions and other transaction costs; portfolio transaction and investment related expenses, including expenses associated with the Fund's liquidity providers; other expenditures which are capitalized in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles; the cost of "Acquired Fund Fees and Expenses," if any, and other extraordinary expenses not incurred in the ordinary course of business) in order to limit annual Fund operating expenses to 1.19% of average daily net assets for Class R6 shares. This contractual expense limitation is effective through April 29, 2022, but can be terminated by a vote of the Board of Trustees of the Trust (the "Board") if it deems the termination to be beneficial to the Fund's shareholders. The terms of the contractual expense limitation agreement provide that Touchstone Advisors is entitled to recoup, subject to approval by the Board, such amounts waived or reimbursed for a period of up to three years from the date on which the Advisor reduced its compensation or assumed expenses for the Fund. The Fund will make repayments to the Advisor only if such repayment does not cause the annual Fund operating expenses (after the repayment is taken into account) to exceed both (1) the expense cap in place when such amounts were waived or reimbursed and (2) the Fund's current expense limitation. 6 Investors pay the net expense ratio of the fund.

Diversification and Asset Allocation does not ensure a profit or guarantee protection against a loss. It is important to note that short-term and trailing performance will fluctuate. We expect all of the funds at some point to experience underperformance versus their benchmarks and peer groups. However, we believe that our research process has helped us identify funds that are likely to perform well over the long term. Our decision to remove a fund is not based on short-term performance, but on in-depth analysis using our Monitoring Criteria. The mutual fund categories are determined by Davenport using a combination of Morningstar categories and a returns-based style analysis provided by Zephyr StyleADVISOR.

Any opinions expressed here are statements of judgment on this date and are subject to future change without notice. This information may contain forward looking predictions that are subject to certain risks and uncertainties which could cause actual results to differ materially from those currently anticipated or projected. The information contained herein has been compiled from sources believed to be reliable; however, there is no guarantee of its accuracy or completeness. There is no guarantee that a company will continue to pay a dividend. The investment return and principal value of an investment will fluctuate. Small and mid cap company stocks may be more volatile than stocks of larger, more established companies. The portfolios may invest in foreign securities which are subject to additional risks such as currency fluctuations, political instability, differing financial standards and the potential for illiquid markets.

Bonds are subject to market and interest risk; values expect to decline as interest rates rise. Bonds may not be suitable for all investors and you should consider specific risks such as credit risk, default risk and volatility prior to investing.

Index Definitions: U.S. Large Caps represented by the S&P 500 Index. U.S. Mid Caps represented by the Russell Midcap Index. U.S. Small Caps represented by the Russell 2000 Index. U.S. Growth Stocks represented by the Russell 1000 Growth Index. U.S. Value Stocks represented by the Russell 1000 Value Index. International Stocks represented by the MSCI EAFE Index. Int'I Small Stocks represented by the MSCI ACWI ex USA Small Index. Intermediate Term Bonds represented by the Bloomberg Barclays Intermediate Government/Credit Index. Bank Loans represented by the S&P/LSTA Leveraged Loan index definition Index. High Yield Bonds represented by the Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Corporate High Yield Index. Corporate Bonds are represented by the Bloomberg Barclays U.S. Government Index. Cash represented by the Federated Govt Obligations.Commodities are represented by the S&P GSCI Index. Gold is represented by the S&P GSCI Gold Spot Index.

Performance shown is historical and is no guarantee of future results. Investing in securities carries risk including the possible loss of principal.

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An index is not available for direct investment; therefore its performance does not reflect the expenses, fees and taxes generally paid with the active management of an actual portfolio. Risk Considerations: International funds invest primarily in equity securities of issuers outside the United States. International investments are subject to additional risks such as currency fluctuations, political instability, and the potential for illiquid markets. Funds that invest in foreign securities may involve greater risks, including political and economic uncertainties, as well as risk of currency fluctuations. Investments in emerging markets come with much greater risk due to political instability, domestic infrastructure problems, currency volatility and limited equity opportunities, as many large companies may still be "state-run" or private. Small and mid cap company stocks may be more volatile than stocks of larger, more established companies. Investments in bonds and other fixed income securities may fall in value if interest rates change. Generally, the prices of debt securities rise when interest rates fall, while their prices fall when interest rates change. An issuer suffering an adverse change in its financial condition could see the credit quality of its securities deteriorate, leading to greater price volatility of the securities deteriorate, leading to greater price volatility of the securities deteriorate, leading to greater price volatility of the securities.

Gross Expense Ratio is the total annual operating expenses of a fund divided by its average net assets. Net Expense Ratio is the total annual operating expenses of a fund, less any fee waivers, divided by its average net assets. This is the expense ratio actually charged by the fund for the previous fiscal year. The mean reversion, or reversion to the mean, is a theory used in finance that suggests that asset price volatility and historical returns eventually will revert to the long-run mean or average level of the entire dataset.



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